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Translation
as a Profession

Daniel Gouadec

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University of Rennes

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Foreword

Many people still think that professional translation is just a matter of ‘languages’, that anyone who has translated at school can become a translator and that translating is something rather easy and straightforward.

It must be emphasized from the start that the **qualified** professional translator is a vital player, both economically and technically: professional translators are highly skilled technical experts, both on account of the contents they translate and of the various ever more sophisticated IT tools and software they must be able to use. They are in fact experts in multilingual multimedia communication engineering.

Languages are essential, but insufficient. What is needed beyond absolute linguistic proficiency is a perfect knowledge of the relevant cultural, technical, legal, commercial backgrounds, and a full understanding of the subject matter involved.

What is needed too, is a gift for writing, an insatiable thirst for knowledge and the stamina, thoroughness and sense of initiative needed to find any information (or informant) that might be required to fully understand that subject matter. And no translator can hope to survive and thrive without the ability to relate effectively and smoothly – both professionally and personally – with numerous partners: clients, colleagues, suppliers of information and terminology, revisers, employers, tax and social security officers, Internet access providers, and many more. A good grounding in marketing, management and accountancy will do no harm in this respect.

At the same time, those persons whom, for lack of a term that would encompass the whole range of activities involved in translation service provision, we keep calling *translators* can be all things to all men (and women), because:

- they come in many flavours, depending on the types of materials, modes of translations, domains, technologies and tools involved;
- the freelancer and the in-house (salaried) translator do not face the same kind of problems;
- the practice of *translating* can cover a wealth of different experiences, depending on the applicable combination of work organisation, translation tools used, and partners involved;
- although translators all belong to the same profession, there are in fact so many different translation markets that one could say there are many

different *translation professions*. Professional practices and conditions differ considerably and can be worlds apart, with the paradoxical result that those who know the least about the profession are often the translators themselves: freelance translators turn their backs on the world of salaried (in-house) translators and the latter deliberately ignore the freelancers (except when they happen to “supply them with work”). Translators on one side of the fence pretend not to know what is happening on the other side.

Be that as it may, all translators are united in that they face the same challenges, *i.e.* the general lack of consideration for their work, the complexity and technicality of the tasks involved, the impact of the ICT revolution on their working practices, the upheaval caused by the Internet, the industrialisation of the translation process and translating practices, market globalisation and job de-localisation, the increasing encroachment of language engineering applications, the rivalry between ‘linguists’ and ‘technicians’, the stringent requirements of quality certification, the fight for official recognition of a professional status (where this is not already effective), or even the fight for survival of the more traditional ‘cottage industry’ translators. Not to mention the fact that cost-effectiveness, both direct and indirect, both in the short-term and in the long-term, tends to be the be-all and end-all of professional practice, since most people who need or request translations want ever more for ever less.

This book seeks to describe and analyse the true world of professional specialised translation, taking the diversity of practices, situations and environments into account. It will explain why professional translation is the cornerstone of multilingual multimedia communication. It will describe the professional translator’s everyday work practices and answer the queries of those who are thinking of entering the profession as well as of those who are already practising translators and who want to be more successful in their field. It will identify and deal with the major issues currently confronting the translation industry and try to outline a vision of the future for the profession, or more precisely, for all the different branches of the profession.

It also purports to explain the complexity and diversity of the tasks involved in the translator’s work so that everyone should understand that quality in translation never comes cheap and also, the other way round, why ‘cheap’ translations, sub-contracted at knock-down prices, can generate huge costs in the long run because of their potentially disastrous consequences.

The first section is an overview of what translation is about. It explains the nature of translation and the issues at stake, describes the extremely diverse categories of translation-localisation and analyses the translation process from A to Z.

The second section describes the **translation profession and markets**. It explains who the translators are, their professional statuses, the type of service

they offer, their work organisation, their partners and their job profiles. It analyses the organisation on the supply side (freelancers, companies, agencies, brokerage firms, bureaus, etc.) and on the demand side (market structure and translators' individual or collective strategies)

The third section answers the **queries** of all those who might be considering working as a translator. It lists the qualities required, describes the options open once the choice has been made, outlines the different steps to becoming a practising freelancer or to set up one's own translation business and explains how to find and hold on to clients by avoiding basic mistakes.

The fourth section concentrates on current vital interests for the translating profession. These include the difficulty of reconciling rates, productivity, deadlines, and quality, the complexities (and rewards) of having to work with innumerable partners, the necessity of strong professional ethics, the impact of standards and certification, and the endless battle for recognition.

The fifth section is devoted to the developments that have provoked **major changes** in the translation industry. It describes the translator's workstation and various 'tools', analyses the effects of both the friendly revolution of ICT and the possibly unfriendly revolution of machine translation, and explains the workings and impact of industrialisation, on the one hand, and globalisation, on the other.

The sixth and final section is devoted to **translator training**. It looks at all the issues involved in terms of profiles, outcomes, and curricula and indicates ways of meeting the challenge. It emphasises the need for well thought-out course structures and contents and for co-operation with practising professionals. It insists on the recognition of prior professional experience. It describes how qualified teaching staff can best be recruited and trained.

A **glossary** of terms is provided in the appendix.

Whenever relevant, advice is provided about how to update the information. This usually comes in the form a particular query to be submitted to search engines. A list of documents for further reading (mostly Web sites) is appended.

This book is based on:

- the results of studies and surveys undertaken by the author in connexion with the development of a translation quality management project (1999–2001).
- surveys and analyses of the translating profession over the 1991–2006 period.
- a 2002 publication in French under the title "Profession traducteur".

Translations are by D. Toudic and the author.

SECTION I

Translation

CHAPTER 1

An overview

It is posited here that professional translation has nothing to do with the academic exercise of ‘translation’ as practised in traditional language courses; the latter is a purely linguistic exercise, generally applied to literary texts, and without any implication of publication. Nor does it have any relation to “*translating for pleasure*”, which is translation carried out in relaxed circumstances, just ‘for fun’. If professional translators get satisfaction from their work, they certainly do not translate for the sheer pleasure of translating. They mean business.

1. Talking at cross purposes

People usually become aware of translation when it does not work, as witnessed by the laughably inadequate or nonsensical user instructions or manuals that come with some imported appliances or devices. More generally, the most common contact with translation is through language classes – not the best way to figure what professional translation is about since academic translation and professional translation are like chalk and cheese – or the interpreter’s voice-over on TV (and that seems ridiculously easy) or, nowadays, the instantaneous and free translation service (just click the ‘translate’ button on the Web). No wonder many people think that translation is “not real work”, that “all you need, to translate, is knowledge of the language and a good dictionary” and that translating simply means changing the words and sentences from one language into another.

Many translation requesters think translations are clearly outrageously overpriced, that most translators are just wet-behind-the-ears language graduates who probably “know nothing about the subject” and that there are now machines and software packages that “*do the same thing just as well for a fraction of the cost.*” They even “*would do it (them)selves if only they had the time.*” So why, they wonder, does it take so long? Why is it so expensive? And why do translators insist on asking so many questions?

The translator, on the other hand, knows that good translations are the outcome of a very demanding and ever more complex technical activity. He just cannot understand why the client inevitably finds the translation too expensive, would like it to be finished before the work has even started, has usually forgotten

to plan the translation time into the work schedule and always forgotten to budget for it anyway, makes last minute changes to the source document (such changes being usually referred to as ‘improvements’), changes his mind half way through the translation, forgets to give the translator the vital documentation or information needed to carry out the job properly and in time, never has time to talk to the translator or approve the translation, considers translation, at best, as a necessary evil and begrudges having to pay the translator’s bill or fee. . . to mention just a few of the grievances!

Whatever the reasons for such obviously serious misunderstanding, there is a good case for making sure that everyone has a better understanding of the nature, challenges and complexity of the whole process of translating.

2. The aims of translation

Translators may be called upon to translate just about anything. Any text, message, fragment of a message or code element may need to be translated. A comprehensive list of materials that are commonly translated would include software programs, video games, software on-line help systems, insurance contracts, extradition proceedings, film sub-titles, songs, film dialogues, all kinds of soundtracks, drug dosage instructions, obituaries, mail catalogues, mobile phone instructions, marketing certificate applications, sales contracts, health certificates, user manuals (millions of them), parts lists, commercial statistics, registry office certificates, educational qualifications and certificates, confidential diplomatic memos, advertising leaflets, adverts, magazine and newspaper articles, alarm system documentation, customer complaints, the faxed minutes of a meeting before the next session starts, poems, novels, short stories, biographies, bills of lading and customs forms, post card titles, medical files, extradition requests, technical memos, annual reports, letters to the shareholders, DNA analysis reports, machine user instructions, patents, and many more.

Nor is language-based material the only type of material that comes up for translation: graphic images, alphanumerical data, videographic material or pictograms, computer code or other types of code, sound, noise, signs, colours and signals, may also have to be “translated” into other codes or languages. The translator may for instance have to inform the client that a colour which is a symbol of happiness and optimism in European cultures is a symbol of death in certain Far-Eastern cultures, and that it may be worth changing the graphic chart for the documentation accordingly. The list of materials that the translator may be called on to “translate” is endless.

3. The nature of translation¹

Translation aims at allowing effective communication – and trade – to take place by overcoming potentially insurmountable obstacles of a linguistic, symbolic, or physical nature: the language barrier, ignorance of a code system (pictograms) or physical impairments such as blindness or deafness (which is where sign language interpreting comes in because, contrary to popular belief, sign languages differ from one country to the next and have to be ‘translated’). Translation is vital for the dissemination of goods, products, services, concepts, ideas, values, etc.

Whether the source document is an on-line software help system or the electrical wiring diagram used by a technician working in cramped conditions under a bark-stripping machine or a die-press, the end-product that the translator delivers, *i.e.* the translation, must meet a number of requirements, both in the message conveyed and the way it is conveyed. It must comply with:

- a) the client’s aims and objectives: the translation must be **effective** in allowing the work provider or client to achieve his aims of increasing sales, winning over readers, entertaining readers, facilitating use of machines, improving his corporate image, or having some criminal extradited, etc.

and/or

- b) the user’s needs or requirements, or even specifications, if such is the case. The translation must also be effective in allowing its users to obtain whatever they are supposed to be getting through it. As a case in point, a translated instructions manual or user guide should at least enable the user to perform whatever operations have to be performed and to do this efficiently and safely. This means cuts and additions may have to be made: an unwieldy 500 page maintenance manual would not, for instance, be much use to a maintenance engineer working in cramped conditions.

plus, at all times,

- c) the usage, standards and conventions applicable: the grammar, spelling, terminology, phraseology, style, modes of reasoning, value systems, etc. must be those of the community concerned – be it the community of all people speaking a given language or the group of people working on a particular project in a particular corporation or organisation.

The ‘products’ or ‘concepts’ being transferred across cultures must be acceptable or made acceptable within the context of the target culture and grasped by those

1. The following analysis does not necessarily apply to literary translation.

they are supposed to reach and influence. Transfer is therefore cultural in nature first – which means appropriate adaptations of contents, organisation, and mode of thinking may have to be made by the translator. The latter must therefore understand exactly what message has to be carried over to whom before organising the content of his own message and expressing it in the appropriate code (that code being most generally, but not exclusively, a language-based code).

The visible substitution of linguistic or non-linguistic signs and codes comes second to the deeper and less visible substitution of thought processes, discourse structure, presentation techniques and rationales, modes of analysis of objects or concepts or interpretation and subliminal suggestion – which means the translator must have a perfect knowledge of the thought processes, mental habits or mores of the target group or community.

Thus, the translator is a key actor in the process of importing or exporting ideas, concepts, rationales, thought processes, discourse structures, pre-conceived ideas, machines, services, myths and so on. He is also a vital go-between in operations and actions involving international co-operation (customer information, extradition procedures, sales, purchases, exchanges, travel, etc.). He is in fact an extremely powerful and critical agent facilitating and even at times enabling economic, strategic, cultural, technical, literary, legal, scientific and ideological exchanges throughout the world.

4. The quality constraints

The effectiveness of the communication process is the ultimate test of quality in a translation, not the ways and means used to express the message. A quality translation should be all of the following:

a) **Accurate:** the contents of the translation must be true to the facts and to the interpretation of those facts within the limits of the domain or specialist field concerned. Ideally, the translation should not contain the slightest technical, factual or semantic error. In fact, zero-defect quality is very seldom achieved, mostly because there are approximations, omissions, ambiguities, and even errors in the original. But it remains every serious translator's ideal, and accuracy, at least, must be the rule.

b) **Meaningful:** the message must be meaningful in the target language and culture even though concepts or their interpretations may vary from one culture to another. This has a number of implications:

- concepts or connotations that become meaningless in the target culture have to be deleted;

- concepts or connotations may no longer be perceptible in the target culture, simply because they were implicit in the source material and the implicit meaning fails to surface in the other culture or language;
- concepts or connotations may require additional clarification in the target culture;
- concepts or connotations may take on a different meaning, become nonsensical or even offensive in the target culture – as in the well-known examples of products whose names carry obscene, vulgar or ridiculous connotations in the target culture.

c) **Accessible:** Any person using the translation must be able to clearly understand the information and the message conveyed. For the translator, this may mean having to adapt both the contents and the register of language to the end-user's level of technical competence. Just like any other medium of communication, the translation must be readable, coherent, logical and (preferably) well written.

d) **Effective AND ergonomic:** the translation must be effective both in terms of communicating a message and of making sure that the message fulfils its initial purpose (and nothing but that purpose). It must in fact fulfil both its initial purpose and any subsequent purpose(s) that its end-users or beneficiaries might consider.

e) **Compliant with** any applicable constraint in terms of:

- target communities' linguistic and cultural standards and usages
- rules and regulations: the objects, devices or processes referred to in the translation may for instance be subject to specific national laws or regulations, which the translator must take into account,
- official standards concerning terminology or technicalities,
- physical limitations: the number of characters may be limited, for instance.
- functional constraints: a translated Web site must, for instance, remain accessible, all the links must be active and the site must be easy to navigate.

f) **Compatible with the defence of the client's or work provider's interests** since the translator is, to all intents and purposes, the client's service provider cum agent cum adviser or partner. Working in the interest of the client means, as already stated, making sure the translation achieves the desired effect (helping to convince, assist, explain, enable use, inform, prompt purchase, assuage, seduce, etc.), while avoiding any undesirable effects (causing anger or irritation on the part of the buyer confronted with incomprehensible user instructions, causing mirth where emotion would be expected, etc.).

To achieve an acceptable and effective translation, the translator must take into account:

- a) the cultural context within which the message will be received and interpreted – the culture being national, corporate or local,
- b) the end-users' value systems – failing which the translation will be rejected outright,
- c) the most effective way of arguing points, presenting information, organising contents according to the aim to be achieved – failing which the translation will not fulfil its purpose,
- d) commonly accepted rhetorical and stylistic conventions in the target culture – failing which, the message will be seen as 'alien'. This may pervade the whole message or be visible in certain aspects, as for instance, when the translation fails to comply with a specific company style guide,
- e) language stereotypes (*i.e.* standard terminology and phraseology) – failing which, the translation will be felt to have been written by an 'outsider' (because the use of the appropriate terms and phrases is seen as the hallmark of technical competence and a sign that the writer or speaker belongs to the narrow circle of 'specialists' in a given field).

More important still, the translator must produce an efficient and cost-effective translation. The decisions involved may seem to have little to do with 'translation' in the traditional sense. Efficiency and cost-effectiveness may, for instance mean omitting a section of the source document, summarising thirty pages in ten lines or so, adding a section to provide information that is not present in the original document but is known by the translator to be vital for the end-user in the target culture, providing a five-page translation for a two-page source document or vice-versa, translating only such items of information as are relevant to the end-user's needs or re-organising a whole set of documents, etc. All this, of course, requires professional competence of the highest order.

5. The stakes

In purely economic terms, professional translation is a by no means negligible segment of the service sector. Taken as a whole, the translation industry is a multi-billion euro business: it is commonly estimated that the commercial translation sector (including human translation, localisation, and machine translation) generated an overall turnover in 2005 of between 9,000 and USD 15,000 million, with annual growth forecasts in the area of 5 to 10% depending on geographical areas, business sectors, and types of translations.²

2. For more information: www.euatc.org/boucau.doc

Nor does this necessarily include the translation work carried out in related service industries such as printing, management, Web site design, communication, television and the film industry.

Translation also generates business for those who buy that kind of service, both directly, *via* the sale of translated documents, and indirectly, by helping to boost imports or exports of goods, services and ideas.

Translation may also be viewed as a strategic, economic, ideological and cultural weapon. But it must be emphasized that such a weapon can sometimes backfire. Thus, while good translations help improve market penetration and product acceptance by adding value to the product or process concerned (whether it be a book, a film, a tractor, an extradition request, a catalogue, a computer, flowers, a sales offer, a veneering machine, etc.) inadequate, poor, or disastrous translations can do no end of damage to an export product or process. A poor translation automatically reflects badly on whatever it is supposed to support and promote, and worse still, on the company, organisation or institution that actually disseminates it, because customers will naturally assume that the company takes no more pride in its products than in the translations it uses to promote them. Considering this remains true even though the company may not necessarily have commissioned the translation itself, it is no surprise that many foreign subsidiaries of multinational companies insist on vetting translations commissioned by the parent company before they are used in the subsidiary's domestic market.

Good quality translations are also a potential source of value added in that it enhances the image of a company's products or services, by preventing litigation and by reinforcing consumer protection. Conversely, poor translations mean loss of business and a downgrading of image of the company or organisation concerned (for whatever reason).

On a more general level, translation can have wider intellectual, economic, cultural and linguistic implications for individual nations. Good quality translation can help slow the gradual downgrading of a language and culture under the pernicious influence of "false" values. It can thus become a way of defending and promoting the target language and culture. Poor translations invariably help to hasten the downhill slide.

As already mentioned, translation helps to develop the exporting or importing of products, ideas, concepts or values. Therefore, the volume of translation undertaken in a given country, or better still, the direction in which the translations take place (from or into the native language), are a good indication of that country's cultural and economic position in the world.

If that country is technologically, economically and/or culturally dominant, the translation flow will be mainly *from* its native language and culture *into* other languages and cultures. Conversely, if that country is a technological, economical and/or cultural underdog, the translation flow will be mainly *from* foreign languages and cultures *into* its native language and culture. In the first case, the language and culture are 'export-oriented'; in the second

case, they are ‘import-oriented’. Translators may be both exporters and importers in turn, even though it is a generally accepted practice for them to work *into* their mother tongue and culture, therefore acting in effect as *importers* and translation may therefore either be a driving force helping to boost and promote intellectual, industrial, economic, political, artistic, scientific and cultural development, or on the contrary, a vector of colonisation in the same areas.

Hence the “Internet effect” which has caused a tremendous increase in demand for translation into English (the *lingua franca*), because anyone wanting to promote a concept, a product, a process, an educational package or anything else, feels naturally inclined to use the language reaching the greatest number of potential supporters, followers or clients. The target is now global and anything translated into the *lingua franca* tends to be relevant one way or other in the sense that it is then likely to find an audience somewhere in the world, or rather, that people are likely to ‘hit’ it. This is why most European countries have experienced such massive demand in recent years for translations into English, which are seen as one way of trying to tip the balance the other way.

Good translators are well aware of both the visible and hidden issues underlying translation. The prime objective is to work in their clients’ interests (whether the latter be a lawyer involved in a fraud case, a salted peanut vendor, a publisher, a film director, a software developer or a political asylum seeker), or at least, to make sure that their translations will not be detrimental to those interests.

Translators must first and foremost strive to avoid making serious errors (those that can cause considerable damage, like mistranslating drug dosages, switching round the connections in a wiring diagram, confusing a rise with a fall or clockwise with anti-clockwise...) or producing nonsense (e.g. increase the inflation of the bladder instead of “inflate the football”³).

Good quality translation must be comprehensible (even though the source documents itself may not be all that clear), clear (unless of course the translated document is designed to be deliberately ambiguous or unclear, such as the software documentation which was designed to prompt the buyer to contact the support service... where he or she could then be persuaded to buy other company products!), acceptable for the reader and, if possible, pleasant to read. The message should be totally coherent as regards the subject matter, the targeted end-users and the aims it sets out to facilitate or achieve. The contents should be entirely compatible with the end-users’ way of thinking, value systems, pre-conceived ideas, disabilities, tastes, expectations and culture. In that respect, most people are not aware that in many international groups, the English language documentation designed for production line operatives is produced in three different versions: one for United Kingdom operatives, one for American operatives and one for East Asian operatives. This does not simply mean that each of the three versions is written in whichever variety of English is most relevant for the market concerned;

3. For more such “gems”, just search the Web for “mistranslations”.

they also differ widely in their contents and structure, in order to take into account deep conceptual-cultural differences.

Finally, translations should comply with all the relevant conventions applicable to efficient communication, and in particular, with all the stereotypes dictated by the subject domain, the medium used and by target language itself in terms of content categories, lines of reasoning, discourse organisation, phrasing and wording. At least in certain fields of industry, such as aeronautics or information technology, compliance is with “controlled languages”, with mandatory or forbidden terminology and phraseology, pre-determined paragraph and sentence structures, limits on segment length, etc.

6. The diversity of translations

Translations can be categorized in a variety of ways. The most common classification is by subject matter or “domain”, *i.e.*

- translation of literary work (novels, short stories, poetry, etc.): *literary translation*, with possible subcategories as:
 - theatrical translation (stage drama),
 - translation of poetry,
 - translation of children’s books,
 - etc.
- translation of technical documents: *technical translation*,
- translation of medical documents (biomedical or pharmaceutical for instance): *medical translation*,
- translation of documents relating to the economy: *economic translation*,
- translation of documents relating to banking and finance: *financial translation*,
- translation of documents having a legal tenor or translated for lawyers, so-called *legal translation*,
- translation of marketing and promotional documents,
- translation of ICT documents,
- Other types of translation specific to various sciences, subject areas or economic sectors.

Another criterion for classification or sub-classification would be type of document. In that case, one would speak of such ‘specialties’ as translation of *insurance policies*, translation of *reports*, translation of *users’ guides*, translation of *catalogues* and *parts lists*, translation of *travel guides*, translation of *presentations*, translation of *e-learning courses*, and, of course, translation of *patents*, etc.

Translations may also be categorized according to their end purpose or function (or end-use) with regard to a particular environment or activity as, for instance:

- *judicial* translations (translated for use in, or in relation to, court proceedings),
- *medical* translations (for use by physicians and healthcare professionals),
- *commercial* translations (for use in a sales or marketing context),
- *editorial* translations (any type of material designed for general publication),
- *marketing/advertising* translations (translations for use in marketing/advertising campaigns or drives),

Categories of translations can also be set up according to types of media requiring the use of highly specific environments, tools and procedures. Relevant categories are:

- *multimedia* translation (translation of documents involving images, sound, text and code, *e.g.* Web sites and CD-ROMs),
- *audio-visual* translation (subtitling, dubbing, voice over translation or translated speech that is heard with the original speaker's voice in the background, over-titling),
- *localisation* (the adaptation of Web sites, videogames, or software and documentation, *i.e.* on-line help, user documentation, user manuals, etc. to a specific local linguistic and cultural environment).

To complicate things still further, translations can also be categorized according to the kind of platform, equipment, software and procedures required or used, with four broad types known as (i) all-through human translation, (ii) translation-memory-assisted translation, (iii) computer-assisted human translation, and (iv) part or full automatic translation or machine translation.

When referring to their work, translators use all the above categories but those categories intersect and overlap. The translation of the contents of a Web site describing contagious diseases and including a self-diagnosis test management system, could thus be described as **multimedia (and maybe even multimodal) medical translation** – or, most probably, as “localisation” – while the translation of DNA analysis results used in an extradition procedure could be defined as **legal-technical judicial translation**.

7. An overview of the translator's job

The activities involved in providing a translation service are organised into three phases:

1. Pre-translation
2. Translation
3. Post-translation

Pre-translation includes anything that takes place up to the moment the translator actually receives the material for translation: everything that has to do with getting the job, writing out estimates, negotiating, getting the specifications right, contracting.

Translation in turn is divided into three stages:

1. Pre-transfer
2. Transfer
3. Post-transfer

Pre-transfer includes all operations leading up to the actual ‘translating’, including preparation of the material, documentary searches, alignment, memory consolidation, terminology mining, deciding on options, etc.

Transfer is the well-known core activity of shifting to another language-culture combination.

Post-transfer covers anything that has to be done to meet the quality requirements and criteria prior to delivery of the translated material. It mostly pertains to quality control and upgrading. It also includes formatting and various preparations for delivery.

Post-translation covers all activities that follow delivery of the translated material. These include possible integration of the translated material (as in simulation of subtitles, layout prior to publishing, integration in a Web site or in an international soundtrack, etc.) but also, of course, all the “administrative” business of getting paid, setting up an archive of the project, consolidating the terminology for future uses, and much more.

The process can be broken down further into twelve stages, in the following chronological order:

1. The translator ‘gets’ the job. This entails:
 - prospecting for the ‘job’
 - checking that the translation does not already exist,
 - negotiating with the client,
 - agreeing on the service to be provided.

The translation contract is formed when the translator and the client come to an agreement on the terms and conditions of the service to be provided.

2. The translator takes delivery of the material to be translated (any kind of material), checks it and makes it fit and ready for translation.
3. The translator analyses the material to be translated.

4. The translator looks for and processes any information required to help her/him get a full understanding of the material and clear up any ambiguous points (this may entail searching for the relevant documentation, studying the technical process or the product involved, being trained in how to use the product or materials involved, etc.).
5. The translator assembles all the 'raw materials' required to carry out the job (*i.e.* relevant terminology, phraseology, sentence structures or phrase templates, as well as previously translated material, etc.). In many cases, the raw materials come as one or more translation memories and dictionaries that may have to be upgraded prior to reuse.
6. The translator sets up the version for translation/retranslation in the appropriate environment, complete with available resources.
7. The translator translates the material – which, in some cases, may mean quite a lot of adapting, reorganising, and restructuring.
8. The translator (or reviser) checks and revises the draft translation.
9. Corrections or amendments are made.
10. The final version is validated.
11. The translated material is formatted according to specifications, integrated or embedded into whatever product or medium is applicable (video, sound track, printed page, etc.) before being transferred to the relevant medium (disk, CD, DVD, Web site, etc.) This may be part of the translator's job though it is usually taken care of by specialist operators.
12. The final version is delivered to the translator's client.

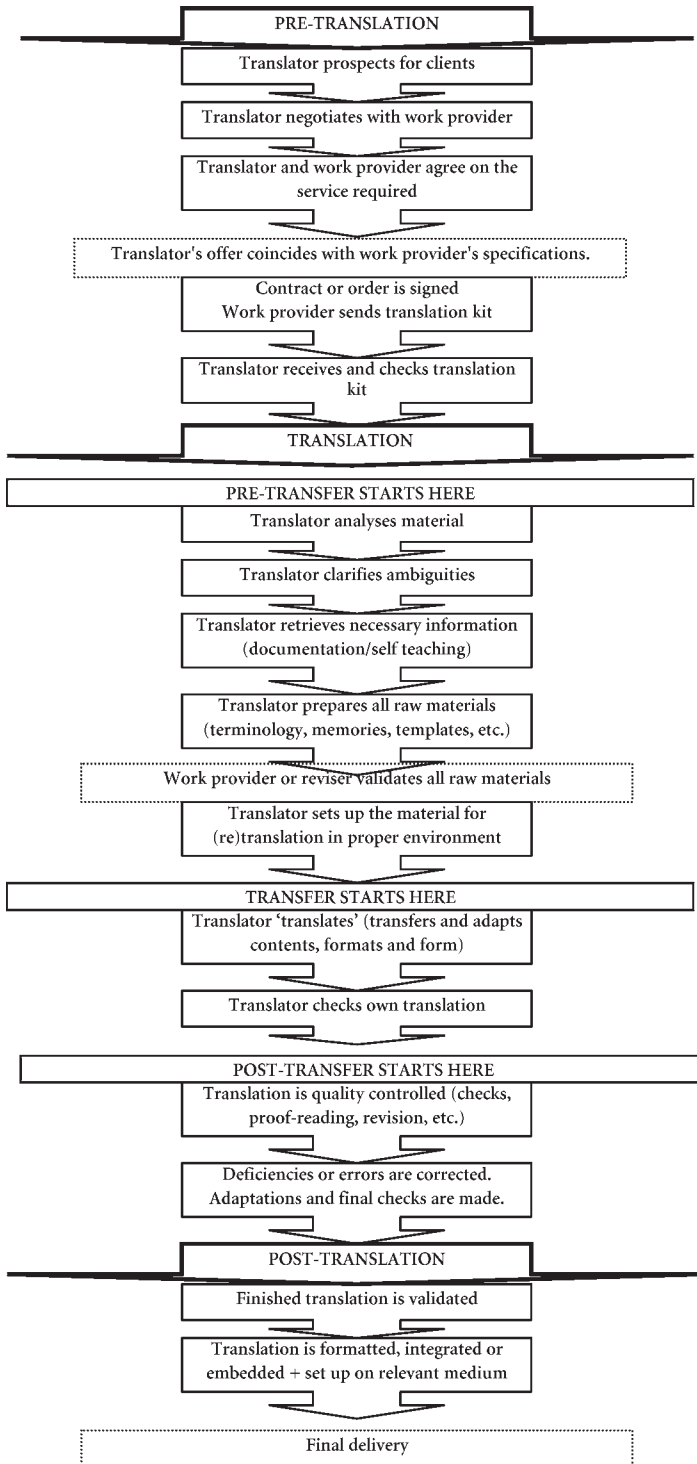
The chart on the opposite page – from Program MLIS3010 (24928) *Quality in translation* D. Gouadec, June 1999 – illustrates the basic translation process.

The process can be analysed in more detail as follows.

① “Getting” the translation

When the offer made by the translator meets the work provider's needs and specifications, both can reach agreement on the nature and terms and conditions of the service to be provided. The transaction stems from the conjunction of a request for translation (made by the work provider *via* a call for tenders or other channels) and an offer of services by a translator, including a time schedule and an estimate. A compromise usually has to be reached between the translator's conditions of sale and his client's conditions of purchase.

Once agreement has been reached, some sort of contract is drawn up and signed. This generally includes a confidentiality agreement. The work provider sends the translator the material to be translated (which can be a text, a video for subtitling, a DVD for dubbing, documents, the contents of a Web site, code,



messages, tapes, or any other kind of source material), together with a ‘translation kit’ that includes anything that the translator might need.

② Receiving, checking and installing the material for translation. Planning

Unless the material is certified 100% reliable, any source document, whether it be text, code, digital recordings or any other type of material, needs first of all to be checked.

In some cases, a number of specific and sometimes complex operations (such as extracting code, disassembling a software application, reconstructing all the on-line help material, keying in data, scanning a document, transferring videos, writing down the script, installing a file in a computer-assisted translation system, etc.) have to be carried out before the translation can start.

In the case of large-scale projects involving many different operators, a project manager will establish a work plan defining who does what and when, for when, and using what resources.

③ Analysing the material for translation and choosing the translation options

Any quality translation requires a thorough analysis of the source material prior to translation.

During the analysis process, the translator will be able to identify problem areas and points that need further clarification or documentation, and can list the points that need to be discussed and negotiated with the work provider. Translation is in fact essentially a question of making choices (simply because there are always several ways of producing a quality translation) and the translator must always be prepared, circumstances permitting, to discuss those choices and have them confirmed – that is, if the work provider or his authorised agent has the required fluency in the language and subject area (and the willingness to participate).

④ Looking for information and clarifying the material for translation

No translator can operate satisfactorily without having a perfect understanding of the subject matter in the material due for translation. This means understanding both the surface meaning and the implicit meaning (in particular, the original author’s open or hidden agenda in writing the material). Whenever the material refers to subject areas or subject matter that the translator is not familiar with and unless the translation is of little importance, the latter has to use every available source to clarify every last detail of the material, *i.e.* by consulting the author or designer/creator, the client, fellow translators and colleagues, by studying the product itself if that is practical, by searching the Web, by questioning information providers, and even, when it comes to the crunch, by following a training course on that particular subject matter, or through any other efficient and fast means.

⑤ Preparing the raw materials (terminology, phraseology, models and templates)

Translation service provision means transforming raw materials into an end-product – the translation.

The raw materials include the ‘source’ material, the translator’s knowledge (and competences) plus terminology, phraseology, sentence structure templates or even existing content or elements that have already been used, either in a previous version of the same document (in the case of product documentation) or in other documents produced for the same work provider or in prior (*upstream*) translations. And this is where the contents of existing translation memories come in handy.

As a matter of fact, the need to have the raw materials ready before translation starts has become obvious with the increasing use of various automata: if a translation aid system, translation memory system, automatic dictionary or translation engine is being used, it becomes imperative to set up all the terminology, phraseology, templates, and ‘memory components’ in advance. It must be emphasized that, whenever such materials are readily available, they may still need to be updated and validated. And this holds true of human translation too.

⑥ Setting up the version for translation in the appropriate environment

Unless this is taken care of by the specific computer-assisted-translation tools or localisation tools, the translator may also need to:

- Set up a version for translation (or retranslation).
The version for translation or retranslation may be a version of the document containing only text (and excluding all tables, graphs, illustrations, etc.) or only subtitles or software menus. This version will also have undergone all the necessary formatting processes (*i.e.* tag freezing, style sheet consolidation, etc.) and will include all the relevant flags and any translation resources available. As a matter of fact, the version for translation is the material to be effectively translated or retranslated. This means it excludes anything not for translation but includes any segments or portions previously translated but not qualified.
- Set up the necessary environment.
The translator may also need to assemble and prepare specific equipment and software for the job, as well as any technical support element needed to carry out the translation.

⑦ Transfer

Once the translator has checked the material and got it ready for translation, defined all the translation options, acquired the knowledge needed to get a perfect understanding of the material for translation, compiled and possibly integrated

all the templates, terms, phrases and previously translated materials to be reused, and set up the workstation environment and any software required, there is good reason to think that optimal quality will be guaranteed during the actual transfer process which consists in creating 'new' material in such a way that it will meet all the target population's expectations as regards contents, form and language.

Transfer naturally means transfer of contents, formats, and form, with all necessary changes and adaptations required by linguistic, cultural, commercial, technical, moral, etc. differences between source and target.

It also goes without saying that the translation is self-checked by the translator.

⑧ Proof-reading (or proof-listening in the case of oral translation) and revision

Once translated, the material has to be checked to make sure that everything that had to be translated has indeed been translated and complies with:

- language use and usage – meaning it is error-free, readable, clear, accessible, and unambiguous,
- the work provider's specifications and the translation options chosen,
- the principles of convergence between the source material and ultimate target material (in terms of meaning, aim and purpose), providing of course the target destinations and the target functions are identical to those of the original.

The proof-reading (or proof-listening) phase and the revision phase are generally kept separate. The proof-reader corrects anything that is blatantly incorrect and flags any anomalies without interfering with the translation itself, while the reviser will correct and improve the translation. If the translated material is particularly sensitive or critical, the translation may in fact need to be quality-checked and revised many times in succession. In the absolute, if 'zero defect quality' is required, it may take up to four or five close revisions to weed out all imperfections – at a cost which explains why 'zero defect quality' in translation remains something of an economically unreasonable objective.

Batch translations (where the same document is shared out between several translators) require specific checking and revision procedures, to ensure complete harmonisation as regards style, terminology, phraseology and discursive organisation.

⑨ Corrections and adaptations, plus finalisation

Ideally, corrections should normally be carried out by none other than the translator, who is ultimately responsible for the quality of the end-product. But this is not always practicable and, besides, revisers and even, in some cases, the work providers themselves may introduce changes without bothering to inform the translator, who usually strongly resents such lack of consideration, especially

when, as often happens in bilingual environments, an ill-advised work provider with poor competence decides to straighten things out his own way.

Adaptations are designed to make sure the translation complies with specific constraints (such as regulatory requirements for instance) or fulfils a different purpose and reaches a different target audience (as when a promotional brochure is derived from the translation of purely technical data) or is suitable for a different medium or a new format. Adapting the material to constraints, purposes, targets, media and formats is in fact tantamount to providing an additional service and deserves extra financial consideration.

Translations may also undergo ‘finalisation’, which may mean anything from updating the translated material (changes may have been introduced since the translation ended) to introducing administrative components (safety warnings, phone number, copyright notices, etc.)

⑩ Validation or ‘qualification’

The finished translation is generally validated or qualified for use, in particular if:

- the document or the material translated is used as a tool or instrument (as is the case with operating instructions and user guides, which can easily be tested *in situ*, or with ‘localised’ software applications which must necessarily be tested and quality-controlled before being launched on the market). The translation is then said to be qualified.
- the work provider knows that the translated document is of critical importance, either because the company’s or organisation’s international brand image is at stake or because considerable financial or technical risk is involved.

⑪ Formatting, integration or implementation

Once the translation has been completed, checked, amended and validated, the translator may need to re-assemble or rebuild a document. This may mean getting the manuscript ready for print or dissemination: reincorporating graphics, images, screen captures, image arrays, etc. either into the paper version or the electronic files.

Once this first-stage integration is effective, it may so happen that the translator has to transfer the translated material – together with its support if the case so happens – to the medium used for dissemination. This may mean printing the document or burning a CD-ROM or returning translated (localised) files to a Web site.

In most cases, though, the formatting, integration and publishing process will of course be carried out by experts in those fields rather than by the translator. This is usually the case in translation companies, which employ in-house specialists. It is also the case if the work provider has its own document production and

printing and/or publishing division, webmaster, or post-production department, to mention just a few possibilities. However, where the work provider does not have the necessary resources, more and more translators are now including this type of extras in the overall service they provide ... and often forgetting to claim the extra money they should be getting.

② Delivery

Delivery of the translated material does not necessarily mean the end of the translator's work.

As a matter of fact, the translator must take great care to file the translation and translation memory, to consolidate and update resources, and finally to analyse the project and its outcome with a view to:

- making sure anything that might be reused will be readily available and 'certified';
- eliminating the sources of any defects or problems and improving the processes.

See also: Chapter 3 'The translation process from A to Z'

Note

Though the techniques and types of materials concerned are specific, the flowchart is basically the same for subtitling/overtitling, dubbing, and localisation (of software, Web sites and video games). It is just that some of the stages are rather more complex.

8. A breakdown of tasks

The process of producing translated material from an original material is, as the above diagram shows, a sequence of tasks and operations, some of which may sometimes lead to new job definitions.

8.1 Pre-translation

Pre-translation includes all the groundwork leading up to the translation itself; *i.e.* understanding the source document, finding all the relevant information as well as the terminology and phraseology and translation memories needed to carry out the translation, and making the source material ready for translation.

Applicable tasks vary according to whether the translation will be carried out by a translation engine or by a human translator, and according to applicable work organisation patterns.

In a broad sense, pre-translation includes all of the commercial negotiations and technical operations prior to receiving the material for translation. In a more restricted sense, it starts once the material that has to be translated has become available.

In all cases, pre-translation includes:

- receiving the material for translation; duplicating and saving it as need be;
- receiving and checking the translation kit;
- upgrading the material if need be;
- compiling or receiving the terminology and phraseology (and translation memories) that the translators will or must use, and integrating these resources into the source material or the translation memory, as the case may be;
- checking that the material to be translated is actually ‘ready and fit for translation’ and making any necessary corrections and amendments;
- looking for specific documentation relevant to the translation and forwarding this to the translator(s);
- dispatching the material to the relevant translators according to their specialist expertise and special skills.

If an automatic translation system (translation engine) is being used, pre-translation means making the material ‘machine-ready’, through:

- converting the source material to a format that the translation system is able to read (by digitisation or format conversion, etc.),
- identifying likely sources of ambiguity for the system – unless the translation engine has the capacity to *automatically* list all ambiguous items;
- identifying all likely obstacles to translation - unless the system *automatically* lists all the items it cannot translate as a matter of course;
- identifying all the language elements the system will likely not recognise – unless the system has an automatic recognition function,
- feeding into the system all the resources it needs to carry out the translation (e.g. creating or updating dictionaries, integrating terminology and phraseology, clarifying meaning),
- rationalising the material by deleting all the items that are likely to cause problems for the system because it won’t recognise them or be able to interpret them.

If need be, it is also the pre-translator’s job to disassemble the material for translation and separate its contents into coherent batches [separate text from menus and graphics; create a file made up of all messages, etc.]

Pre-translation is something translators do as a matter of course except where (or when) it makes sense to have one operator specifically perform those tasks. That operator is then called a ‘pre-translator’. Pre-translators work mostly in

companies that translate or subcontract huge volumes in many languages. Pre-translation is an efficient way of ensuring homogeneity and, of course, providing the translators with material that allows them to 'just translate', thus increasing their productivity and reducing time to market.

8.2 Information retrieval and management

Information retrieval and management is an important component task of the translation process. The information search and management that a translator (and a translation company) carries out includes all the information search and management tasks that any information manager carries out except that (1) the search is focused on the translation job in hand and (2) informers not documents (besides the readily available Web resources) are the highest priority, simply because, once again, time to market is always extremely short.

All translators have to find and manage all the information and documentation they need, except when and where it makes sense to have one operator specialise in that particular task for reasons of efficiency. In such cases, the information and documentation manager (very often the company 'librarian' or terminologist with extended expertise in information retrieval and documentary searches) works from the list of points that translators want clarified. He identifies the relevant resource centres, finds the relevant documents, databases, Web sites or informers, compiles the data and forwards it to the translators.

8.3 Terminography

Terminography (terminology mining and management) is an essential component task of the translation process. In fact, if the terminology is not available, the translation will not be adequate. Besides, terminology is a highly sensitive substance since it is the sign of knowledgeability and technical competence and even the slightest error may have quite impressive consequences.

In translation service provision, the terminographic part of the job means:

- identifying the critical terminology in the source material,
- identifying the relevant terminology sources – beyond the Web corpora that any translator may readily access,
- finding the resources and, more particularly, the informers that are likely to be able to shed light on the terminological problems in the source material,
- getting hold of the required terminology,
- validating the terminology (or having it validated),
- forwarding the terminology to the translator(s) or injecting it into the material to be translated.

Terminology mining is something all translators do as a matter of course, except where and when it makes sense to have one operator specialise in that particularly sensitive domain. Having a full-time terminographer is a good idea when there is need to harmonise the terminology used by various translators working on the same project and also, naturally, when a significant part of the translating is done using computer assisted translation tools or a translation engine. The latter cannot work unless they are fed the required terminology.

8.4 Phraseography

Phraseography (phraseology mining and management) is becoming an important component task of the translation process. In fact, it is now becoming quite clear that customers and translation users want phraseological conformity (meaning the translator uses the collocations, set phrases, sentence patterns and paragraph organisations which are particular to the domain area or the type of document concerned or used only by a particular professional group).

In translation service provision, the phraseographic part of the job means:

- identifying the critical terminology in the source material,
- identifying the relevant phraseology sources – beyond the Web corpora that any translator may readily access,
- finding the resources and, more particularly, the informers that are likely to be able to shed light on the phraseological problems in the source material,
- getting hold of the required phraseology,
- validating the phraseology (or having it validated),
- forwarding the phraseology to the translator(s) or injecting it into the material to be translated.

8.5 Transfer (so-called ‘translation’)

The transfer task is, of course, central to the translating process and it is what all ‘translators’ carry out.

Transfer normally means transferring contents and meaning into a different culture, a different code (linguistic or other), a different communicative setup, for an audience or users who are different, though homologous, making all necessary adaptations to that effect and purpose.

Transfer normally includes self-checks and controls by the translator himself.

8.6 Quality controls (part of quality assurance)

Quality controls are part of quality assurance. They follow the transfer phase and are deemed to be part and parcel of the translation phase since they are normally ‘inescapable’ and required by all emerging standards (notably EN15038).

Quality controls are carried out in proof-reading or in revision mode (human-made translations) or in post-editing mode (machine made translations).

Note: to many people, quality controls are strictly equated with “post translation”.

8.6.1 *Proof-reading*

In the strictest sense, **proof-reading** consists in correcting any kind of blatant defects (spelling or grammar mistakes, missing bits, faulty formatting) **and** pointing out any apparent defects, discrepancies or translation errors, leaving it to the translator or any other authorised person to make whatever corrections might actually be justified in that respect.

Note: today, proof-reading may involve listening to the recorded translation or to the voice-synthesized version of the translated material and dictating the appropriate comments and suggestions while correcting the blatant errors.

8.6.2 *Revision*

In the strictest sense, **revision** includes all operations undertaken to guarantee that the translation meets all applicable quality criteria and quality levels (*i.e.* is free of linguistic, technical or translation errors). This means making all necessary corrections and changes (improvements, amendments, substitutions, reorganisations). Revision is an upgrading operation that makes the translated material compliant with all applicable requirements and, of course, with the rules of the art.

It is worth noting that practising translators usually consider that ‘mutual revision’ (*i.e.* translators revising each other’s work) is highly desirable whenever possible, and that several levels of proof-reading and revision are **absolutely essential** when it comes to total quality.

Note: with the development of voice technologies, revision is now more and more frequently dictated, with the translator making the requested or required corrections and changes.

All translators are normally expected to quality control their translations. They do so in revision mode, as they will of course make all necessary changes and amendments.

When the quality requirements are particularly stringent all quality checks and controls are in the care of dedicated specialised personnel.

8.6.3 *Post-editing*

Post-editing means checking, proof-reading and revising translations carried out by any kind of translating automaton. It is becoming a job in its own right because automatic translation is coming back in force and, some would say, with a vengeance: post-editing of automatic or machine translation is systematic unless the client is prepared to put up with a ‘rough idea’ of the source text content as supplied by the raw machine translation – which is no longer a rare occurrence. It means both (a) introducing any changes needed to render the translated text either just readable or deliverable – depending on the quality required by the client –, and (b) amending the alignment tables or algorithms so that errors do not happen again – or suggesting amendments.

Despite its generally unglamorous reputation, post-editing can be an interesting and fulfilling job, especially when it involves both translation and information technology skills in the development of more efficient machine translation systems. To many translators, post-editing is a very attractive proposition.

8.7 Post-translation

Note: to many people, “post translation” is synonymous with quality controls.

Post-translation includes all the tasks that are carried out after the material has been translated and its quality checked.

Applicable tasks vary according to the medium but usually include:

- editing [page layout, illustrations, formatting, screen captures, message integration, code reassembly],
Editing is normally done by an editor.
- installing the translated material on the support medium in the required format,
- testing and finalising the ‘end product’
- installing the end product on its broadcast medium (Web site, DVD, CD, FTP server, etc.)

Post-translation tasks are sometimes all carried out by the translator himself, but can be split up between any number of operators.

On-line QA

On-line quality assessment (or online quality assurance) is a full test to make sure that the translated version of a videogame or a software package or a ‘cloned’ Web site is fully operational. This quality control function is vital in localisation com-

panies where it is essential that translated software, or videogames, for instance actually perform as they should.

Categories of translation

Introduction

The basic dividing line along which categories of translations are established runs between general translation and specialised translation.

1. General translation

General translation refers to the translation of documents and materials that do not belong to any specific type or domain area, do not belong to any particular type, do not entail a specific translation process or the use of equipment beyond an ordinary computer and word processor. It therefore covers a relatively wide range of materials such as letters, biographies, monographs, treatises, recipe books, tourist brochures, tourist guides, press articles (in newspapers or magazines), post card legends, company presentations, user guides, etc. In fact, general translation is all that remains after all specialisation areas have been listed.

Generalist translators translate documents and materials which cannot be labelled as belonging to a particular type and do not normally require a high degree of specialist or technical knowledge. The generalist translator usually touches on “all kinds of subject areas”, has a “whole range of clients” and rarely deals with large-scale translation projects. Generalist translators will usually tackle any source material ranging from general non-fiction works for publication (but not literature, which is a specialism in itself) to more or less technical documents. They may occasionally venture into one of the more highly specialised areas of translation, but will generally refrain from taking on the most highly technical or specialised types of material if given the choice. When they do, it is usually a ‘one-off’, because they cannot afford to turn down a request from a regular client, and this may lead them to overreach their knowledge and skills at that particular point in time. Generalist translators are, by definition, ‘all-rounders’ who have to be able to juggle with a 30-page document on metal sanding machines, a sales contract for second-hand trucks and a user guide for a floor laying machine, not forgetting that urgent four-page fax describing a new liquid pig feed manufacturing system. When first starting out, the generalist translator usually has to try to make his mark in a number of very different translation markets, taking on contracts for

rather small documents but for a large number of clients who rarely supply more than 100 pages a year each. His 'catchment area' is generally local or, at best, regional, and his workload will depend very much on local reputation, snowballing quickly by word of mouth if the original clients are happy with the work supplied. The natural trend for most generalist translators is to specialise as much as possible and as soon as possible. This happens for a number of reasons. Regular clients soon require more specialised translations and supply ever larger volumes in one or two particular specialist areas. This means the translator gradually and quietly acquires the knowledge, skills (and confidence) that lead to specialisation. At the same time, he also realises that it is far easier and more profitable to target specific markets and clients than to spend time and money advertising services on a wider basis. It is indeed more cost-effective to concentrate on certain types of contracts (the more technical, repetitive and sizeable ones). In the course of the move towards greater specialisation, the translator will, for some time, carry on dealing with all kinds of source materials while moving towards greater specialisation in one or two particular areas. He may also become a duly recognised 'sworn' translator, if only because this adds value when addressing clients or prospective clients.

2. Specialised translation

Specialised translation can be defined as the translation of materials which:

- (1) refer to a highly specialised field or domain (*e.g.* law, finance, computer science, telecommunications, etc.)
- (2) and/or are of a particular type,
- (3) and/or are targeted at a particular audience or public through specific dissemination channels and/or are used by specialists in specific circumstances,
- (4) and/or are embedded in a particular medium (*e.g.* multimedia technology, film, video, ICT, etc.) therefore calling for the use of special procedures, tools and protocols and leading to the emergence of new specialisms or even jobs.

2.1 Translation of specialised material

The most widely-known sub-categories of translation are those of materials with specialised subject matter – often to the point that the medium too is specialised. Sub-categories are a matter of volume since a sub-category emerges whenever a significant number of translators are concerned. Traditional sub-categorizing is as follows:

- technical translation,
- commercial translation (sometimes recognized by the official qualification of 'commercial translator'),

- financial translation,
- legal translation,
- biomedical and pharmaceutical translation,
- scientific translation,
- IT translation,
- marketing and advertising translation,
- translation of X documents (where X refers to the denomination of a given domain).

2.1.1 *Literary translation*

Literary translation is the translation of any kind of fictional work, including prose narratives, drama and poetry. The last two types (drama and poetry) involve particular constraints related, for instance, to theatrical performance or poetic style. Further specialisation may occur if the translator chooses to focus on one author, period, style, country or region, or if she/he specialises in children's books, crime novels, science fiction or comic strips, with the specific features related to the combined use of text and graphics.

In most countries, literary translation is viewed as a form of authorship. The translator may be a “secondary author” vis-à-vis the original author of the translated work, but is often considered in the eyes of the law as an author in her/his own right.

Literary translation often requires particular talents on the part of the translator in terms of style, sensitivity, creativeness and aesthetic feeling. In the most talented, they border on creative genius and are generally considered a natural gift rather than an acquired skill.

To dispel a few common illusions, literary translation is anything but ‘free’. It is in fact quite ‘controlled’, with the publisher, the manager of the collection, the proof-reader, and the commercial staff all having strong opinions about what the translation should look like in terms of length (yes, translations of literature may be cut or expanded), contents, and style. In that respect, with the exception of the ‘monuments’, literary works are first and foremost commercial products.

Literary translation is the preserve of full-time professionals (deriving most of their income from literary translation) and enlightened amateurs. Their professional profiles differ widely and include:

- authors in their own right (novelists, poets or playwrights),
- well known literary translators, generally overworked and in great demand among publishers,
- budding literary translators, bent on building up a reputation, who are encouraged by the fact that literary works are now increasingly marketable

commodities and by the general acceptance of translations by the reading public and critics alike,

- ‘pulp fiction’ translators, often faced with cut-throat competition in their particular market segment,
- all kinds of amateur and part-time translators.

A particular subcategory of literary translation would be the translation of philosophical works since it requires specialist knowledge of a particular kind. Translators of philosophical works are a category by themselves.

2.1.2 *Technical translation*

Technical translation is a specialisation in its own right. It covers the translation of any material belonging to a particular area of knowledge, technical field or technology (e.g. mechanical engineering, hydraulics, electrical engineering, business management, etc.), providing the materials require special knowledge of the area involved. To some people, technical translation is the translation of anything non-literary. To complicate things further, the professional denomination, and practice, of technical translators tend to blur borders or make them overlap.

Technical translators specialise in one technical area of expertise; e.g. information processing or technology, telecommunications, wood carving, food processing plant cleaning, sound insulation, ship hull maintenance, electric coils, animal cloning, spectrometry, cochlear implants, poultry slaughtering, gas and oil, RAMS, soldering, mechanical engineering, etc. Most technical translators may actually have to specialise in more than one domain.

Technical translators may have to translate non technical material such as faxes, meeting minutes, memos, etc. simply because their employer or client does also need to have such documents translated and would simply not understand why the technical translator would not want to translate everything they need translated.

Many technical translators could more appropriately be referred to as ‘translator-cum-technician’ or ‘technician-cum-translator’, by virtue of the fact that they have to combine the skills of the translator with those of the domain specialist. Being a combination of both, technical translators are constantly confronted with the need to dispel deep-rooted doubts about the ability of linguists to understand and translate technical material, or conversely, about the ability of engineers to acquire translation skills which are normally the result of long and complex learning processes. The two positions are usually expressed as (a) ‘*None but a technician really understands such things and can actually translate them*’ or (b) ‘*Actually training someone to be a translator takes no end of time and technical knowledge without writing skills and linguistic-stylistic finesse is simply not enough*’. No wonder so much effort has been expended on providing translators with the technical

knowledge needed, or giving engineers the necessary language and translation skills, so that the age-old question about “*who knows best, the engineer who has language skills and can translate or the translator who can understand all the finer technical details?*” can at long last be put to rest.

2.1.3 *Commercial translation*

Commercial translation covers all types of commercial documentation, such as invoices, contracts, transport documentation, customs documents, etc. Most commercial translators are corporate translators or specialists in a translation company and their field of expertise usually extends into financial and legal matters.

2.1.4 *Financial translation*

Financial translation encompasses any kind of financial documentation (company reports, financial statements, finance deals, contracts, stock market information, banking documents, fiscal information, etc.) related to the areas of finance, banking, taxes, stock exchange transactions and economic activity in general. The volumes of financial translation are increasing fast with the move towards financial globalisation. The demand for translators familiar with the world stock markets and financial markets has increased significantly over the past few years and financial translators associations are springing up in many countries.

2.1.5 *Legal translation*

Legal translation proper covers all legal or legally binding documents such as laws, directives, standing orders, regulations or contracts. Legal translation is of the essence in the translation services of the Canadian Parliament, the European Court of Justice, or the European Parliament. It is usually acknowledged that the *bona fide* legal translator should either be a lawyer or at least someone with a solid legal background. Failing that, legal translations should always be a joint effort by a translator and a lawyer, the latter having the last say, of course.

2.1.6 *Biomedical and pharmaceutical translation*

This area of translation includes all kinds of documents relating to medicine and pharmaceutical products (e.g. research documentation, experimentation reports, analyses, test results, drug authorisation requests, treatment protocols, etc.).

Biomedical and pharmaceutical translators deal with documents in the area of medicine and the pharmaceutical industry. As in the case of legal translation, translators in these areas usually require the professional expertise of the physician or pharmacist, especially for the more sensitive documents (e.g. drug marketing applications). There has therefore been a big demand in this market segment for qualified doctors and pharmacists willing to work as translators. Alternatively, doctors or pharmacists may revise work done by professional translators, until the latter acquire the necessary expertise.

All translators working for medical and pharmaceutical laboratories are deemed to be 'biomedical and pharmaceutical translators', even though most of their work may involve administrative and general documents.

2.1.7 *Scientific translation*

Scientific translation encompasses scientific research papers, theses, monographs, and various symposia and conference presentations, anything, in short, that is deemed to contribute to the advancement of science. It is usually commissioned by individual scientists, research laboratories and science publications.

This is generally a neglected segment of the translation markets. With notable exceptions, scientists tend to have little time and money for translation and are often loathe to admitting that they cannot **write** properly in English (which is what scientific translation is about). So they do it themselves – often having their papers turned down as 'poor English' – instead of having a qualified translator do it properly.

It is generally assumed that science translators must be experts in the subject area involved. And it is a well-known fact that science is published in English. Many scientific journals require translations to be the work of native speakers of the language of publication (a quality often judged on the basis of the translator's name). The requirement for linguistic acceptability of research papers may even extend to having an author or joint author with an unquestionably English-looking and sounding name. This is why, except where provision is made for translation costs, research laboratories all over the world tend to resort to the services of native English-speaking temporary research assistants or associate team members. It is usually the rule, under such circumstances, that the 'translator' is recognised as joint author of the article or paper. In any case, that fellow scientist does the necessary editing and rewriting to provide the degree of fluency and authenticity that the journal editors usually require.

2.1.8 *IT translation*

IT translation refers to translations of any document relating to IT hardware or software. This is not quite the same as 'localisation', which refers to the translation of linguistic components embedded in various products such as software (see below).

2.1.9 *Advertising and marketing translation*

Advertising and marketing translation is concerned with getting across the impact of campaigns. It is highly critical as is illustrated by the advertising agency promoting the 'weight gain' afforded by revolutionary light aeroplane tires. Advertising and marketing translation is some kind of a compromise between the subtleties of literature and the rigour of technical translation, with commercial rules and

principles in between. It is more and more widely connected with Web site, video games and software localisation.

2.1.10 *Translation of [X]*

In fact, only the nine above domains warrant the existence of domain sub-categories. All other forms of specialisation would be labelled “translation of X”, where X is the name of the domain accompanied by the term ‘documents’/‘documentation’ or ‘material’ (e.g. translation of civil engineering documents or translation of woodcarving documentation).

2.2 Translation of specialised types of documents/materials

Again, where sheer volumes warrant, there emerges a category of translation defined as the translation of a particular type of document. It is thus customary to single out patents, foreign trade instruments, insurance policies, and a few others.

Today, the translation of patents is a good case in point as there is much talk of doing away with the translation of patents by deciding that a patent application filed in one language (guess which?) suffices for the whole of Europe. This would probably mean the death of the high-volume patent translation industry.

Incidentally, another category of translations would be CV translation, whose volumes have rocketed recently and which also provides a good entry point for the provision of further services in translation, language tuition and internationalisation.

Note: Web sites and multimedia material do not fall within this category as they have generated what might be considered entirely autonomous categories and huge markets and will be considered separately.

2.3 Special target/channel/purpose translations

The sub-categories concerned are judiciary/court translation, community translation, Internet translation, institutional translation, and editorial translation.

2.3.1 *Judiciary/court translation or sworn translation*

Judiciary translation is translation done for the courts and police forces. The range of documents concerned is wide and judicial translation can be considered as the conjunction of diverse specialised translations.

Judiciary or court translators are usually sworn in. In some countries, they are tested for competence; in some others, there is no qualification requirement (especially when no test can reasonably be carried out because the languages concerned are spoken by only a handful of residents in the whole country). Traditionally, court translators are also interpreters.

A *certified* translation is a document translated into another language that is still accepted as a legal document after translation. Certification that the translation is true to the original means the translated document has the same legal validity as the original. In most countries, certified translations must bear a (fraudproof) signature, a seal and a declaration that the translation is complete and correct to the best of the translator's knowledge and belief.

In some cases, certification is not enough and the document must be legalized prior to translation. This is done through an Apostille: a legal document certifying the authenticity of a signature, and/or the quality of the signatory and/or the seal or stamp on a public document, thereby legalising the said document for international use under the 1961 Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement for Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents. For example a Statutory Declaration which has been signed by a recognised Notary Public, translated and certified, would be of no use abroad without an Apostille. Countries which are members of the Hague Convention will accept the Apostille as providing full legalisation, while other countries may still require completion of further procedures.

Notarisation may be required to authenticate the translation of a legal or contractual document. This is done either by the 'sworn' translator, when applicable, or by a notary public, who binds the documents together and applies his seal.

In Common law countries such as the UK, most of the USA, Ireland, and some of the former British colonies, the translation is done by a translator (who hopefully has a formal qualification in translation) but 'certified' by a notary public. The translator files an *affidavit* (i.e. a declaration in writing made upon oath by the translator before a person authorised to administer oaths, i.e. a Notary Public or Commissioner for Oaths).

In Civil law countries such as Continental Europe and much of the rest of the world, the 'sworn' translator both does the translation and notarizes it, thus acting as a Notary, swearing a public oath to the veracity of the translated document. The 'sworn' translator must generally (but not always) have a formal qualification in translation and be registered in the relevant country or by the competent body (the Courts in France, the Foreign affairs Ministry in Spain, the Board of Trade in Brazil).

Where such a function and status exist, sworn translators also act as judicial experts and Court translators. This means they usually act as court interpreters, are summoned whenever the police authorities need to interview or question suspects or victims who do not speak the language of the country, and translate any documents pertaining to criminal justice cases involving international procedures or foreign nationals. In fact, whenever a case has foreign connections (e.g. when the accused or witnesses do not speak the language of the country, when an extradition request has to be forwarded to foreign authorities or when witnesses have to be interviewed abroad, etc.) the justice system generally demands that all case items be translated into the national language (including extradition requests, court rulings, technical experts' reports, witness interview proceedings, interview recordings, requests to foreign police forces or judicial authorities, synthesis reports, correspondence, experts' reports written in a foreign language, video transcripts, case records, etc.).

In fact, judicial experts and Court translators will be called upon to translate all kinds of documents involving all manner of contents, and encompassing a whole range of specialisms according to the nature of the case in hand. The case items and documents relating to a drugs case will of course be very different from those relating to a murder case

(which may involve anything from DNA fingerprinting to ballistics) or those involved in a case of embezzlement.

2.3.2 *Community translation (and interpretation)*

Community translation encompasses all translating (and interpreting) carried out to facilitate inter-community relations within a given country where diverse linguistic (and cultural) communities cohabit. It is worth mentioning only as the daily activity of community translators-interpreters whose numbers are sharply on the increase in multilingual countries.

2.3.3 *Internet or online translation*

So-called Internet translation is the (immediate) translation of online material: e-mail messages or mailing list contents or the information posted on forums – a type of translation that is sometimes automated or done using translation engines.

In the most common variant, the translator gains access to the client's material through an ID and a password and translates the segments (usually sentences or menu options) that are displayed on screen in a table. The translator types the translation in a box opposite or below the text, moving from one box to the next as the segments follow each other. The terminology is usually already embedded or, if not, available online too. In the most extreme cases, the system does not display the next segment until the one in hand has been translated (and has disappeared from the screen together with its translation). As a rule, translators dislike this setup as it leaves them absolutely no leeway, is a serious obstacle to cohesion and coherence, and allows no checking or editing once the translation has been keyed in.

The situation where the translator retrieves the client's material on an FTP server or by any other form of downloading is not, properly speaking, on-line translation: it is simply a different way of downloading and uploading files before and after translating. The translating is carried out off-line. Instant Web site translation is something that is exclusively done by machine translation systems – with more and more Web site servers identifying the connected computer as belonging to a particular locale and imposing the corresponding language on the user regardless of his actual language or the language he wants the information in. And that means being bombarded with automatic translation.

Human Internet translation is only used when:

- the information flow is bi-directional and interactive;
- machine translation systems simply cannot deal with the material;
 - either because they are not available on line with the material concerned (e.g. e-mail messages);
 - or because machine translation is not yet available for the language combination required;
- or the work provider wants to be able to specify the target audience and the angle of the message he wants to get across.

Internet translation is likely to develop rapidly in environments where the in-house translator needs to work in permanent contact with the work provider and more specifically, when (for whatever reason) a translator is seconded to the work provider's premises.

2.3.4 *Institutional translation*

In officially bilingual or multilingual countries and organisations, one can identify a special category of ‘institutional translation’, meaning any translation carried out in the name, on behalf of, and for the benefit of institutions. The organisations and institutions concerned include national and Community Parliaments, International Courts of Justice, European institutions, Ministries, United Nations or OECD institutions, NATO, the IMF, Central Banks, and many others. In fact, such institutions and organisations do have translations carried out in almost all possible domains and for all types of documents. Yet, if the sub-category encompasses an almost infinite variety of documents and materials, the conditions and style of institutional translation are so distinctive that the sub-categorization is fully justified.

Institutional translation is partly carried out in-house (by official translators who often are civil servants) and partly externalized (usually to subcontracting agencies). Whatever is confidential or secret or critical will be dealt with in-house. Although subcontracted translations are deemed to be non-critical, confidentiality is of the essence and no one can translate important institutional documents without prior security screening.

2.3.5 *Editorial translation/Translation for the publishing industry*

Editorial translation or translation for the publishing industry (outside literary and philosophical translation) again encompasses a variety of documents and materials yet, once again, the conditions are highly specific and subcategorizing is fully justified. In fact, editorial translation includes anything that is translated for general publication and, more broadly, anything that is translated on behalf of a publisher and, in most cases, at his request.

Translators for the publishing industry are freelance translators. They include:

- generalist translators (who may translate everything from the ABC of Accountancy to Zoology for Zealots, including biographies, children’s books, cookery books, school text books, tourist guides, travel books, and books on many other subjects),
- literary translators,
- translators of works of philosophy,
- specialised or specialist translators,
- multimedia translators.

In most countries, translators working for publishing are neither employed by the publisher nor considered as ‘standard’ freelance translators on the grounds that they are paid on a different basis. The tax and contributions that apply are those of authors, not those of run-of-the-mill translators. Depending on the terms of the contract they sign with the publisher, they will either sell their copyright or be paid royalties. Selling their copyright means they forego all rights against payment of a given sum. When they are paid royalties, their remuneration generally includes an advance on sums due and they will not receive any extra

money until the advance has been covered. In fact, unless the published translation itself is on the best-seller lists, the advance is usually deemed to cover the translator's royalties.

2.4 Translation of material embedded in particular media

The special media concerned are video, film, and code. Their translation goes by different names according to the media and the product as well as the techniques used. The basic sub-categories are:

- Localisation (of software, Web sites, and videogames respectively);
- Media translation (subtitling, overtitling, voice over, dubbing).

2.4.1 Localisation

Localisation (abbreviated as **L10n**) is the adaptation of a product/concept/process to the particular physical, technical, linguistic, cultural, ethic, religious, philosophical, commercial, marketing, etc. conditions and requirements of an audience or users belonging to a specific 'locale' defined as a the delimitation of a geographical-cultural area and the particular variety of language that the people concerned use. It is part of globalisation (abbreviated as **g11n**), which is the process of making a concept/process/product acceptable and usable the world over through *internationalisation* and *localisation*, in that order.

Internationalisation (abbreviated as **i18n**) means getting rid of any specific cultural references – in the broad sense of the word including ideology, religion, ethics, etc. – as well as any peculiarities of such as taste, appearance, requirements for installation or use of machines, etc. Localisation means adapting whatever has resisted internationalisation – thus remaining 'strange' – to the conditions that prevail 'locally'.

Both globalisation and localisation have to do with cultural differences. Globalisation is cultural assimilation; localisation is cultural adaptation. And both impact the technical and the linguistic aspects of things. One will therefore talk of technical-cultural localisation (adapting the concept/product/process to the 'minds' and 'ways' of the target populations) and of linguistic-cultural localisation (adapting the messages and documentation to the language and usages of the target populations).

Technical-cultural localisation is generally carried out by technicians, designers, developers – possibly with the help of a translator in charge of pointing out whatever is not technically and culturally viable. Linguistic-cultural localisation is a variety of translation and is therefore carried out by translators (so-called localisers). Given that localisation applies to software (and its accompanying documentation), videogames (and all accompanying material) and Web sites, the difference is just a matter of medium. Basically, localisation concerns all 'instruments'.

This includes all ‘things’ that people use **and** everything (mostly documents) that facilitates their use. Thus, localisation is basically ‘instrumental translation’ or translation that literally produces instruments. Failure to adapt contents, format, and form in any way carries the immediate penalty of non-understanding, non-acceptance and/or non-usability.

Be that as it may, localisation is technically a variety of translation. Yet, for reasons of marketing (the hope of getting more money for a high-tech translation) and self-appraisal, most translators do claim a different status for localisation. And this is in fact fully acceptable provided localisation is not simply a bigger name for translation – meaning localisation actually involves more than translating text or contents that come on new, and mostly hyper, media. As the following will show, most people wrongly use the term ‘localisation’ to cover the translation of anything related to software packages or Web sites or videogames when, in fact, very little of the ‘transfer’ activity would not qualify as translation. And many more make an untenable distinction between ‘localisation’ (which, they say, is adaptation) and ‘translation’ (which, the same say, closely fits the original). What it amounts to is tragic ignorance of the history of translation.

A description of the three domains and cycles of localisation will help clarify matters and establish the true differences between translation and linguistic localisation proper.

2.4.1.1 *Software localisation* Technically speaking, software localisation refers to all the operations required to produce specific national or regional versions of an application (including Readme files, CD covers, on-line helps, user instructions, installation instructions, etc.) so that the product will be just as effective and user-friendly in other languages and contexts as the original version is or was in its home market.

Software localisation usually includes a dozen or so different stages requiring several different types of professional skills, involving one or more operators, depending on the techniques used (and the tools available), the degree of specialisation required for the particular product and the range of professional skills available. The localisation team generally includes a software engineer. The successive stages can be defined as follows:

The shaded parts identify what the ‘translators’ would do as a matter of course.

1. The structure of the application and its documentation is analysed
2. The project is planned, starting with a definition of the stages involved and the resources required.
3. The work provider specifies the service required.
4. The product is disassembled: the application is broken down into its various components, which may be stored in different files *i.e.*

- source code
 - text and messages
 - menus
 - screen captures
 - dialogue boxes
 - user interfaces
 - graphics
 - video
 - sound
 - buttons
 - etc.
5. Pre-translation: this includes tag processing; format conversions; setting up the files and materials in the translation environment (in the required format); acquiring the relevant terminology and phraseology resources; doing the necessary research into the subject, as the case may be.
 6. The various elements requiring translation into the target language are translated (the corresponding software changes are made to ensure that the application will be at least as effective and user-friendly in its 'new' cultural environment). The elements that are actually translated include:
 - actual contents (databases, text, downloadable files, access protocols, run-times, scripts, and related sites),
 - user interfaces (messages, buttons, icons, dialogue boxes, menu bars, etc.),
 - on-line help files, product documentation, packaging, disk covers, and any marketing literature, press communiqués, etc. needed for the product launch on the relevant foreign market.
 7. Quality controls are carried out (quality of the translation, quality of the language used, technical quality, functional quality, overall coherence). Functional tests are carried out with as wide a variety as possible of computer screen formats and configurations and IT platforms.
 8. Interfaces are further processed as required (for instance, buttons or other elements may have to be re-designed and resized).
 9. The application is re-assembled, which may include:
 - resizing,
 - re-assembling programme blocks,
 - modifying and/or re-integrating links into the translated files,
 - checking image sources in the translated files, etc.
 10. The various components and modules are integrated into the software package.

11. The relevant accessories and tools needed in the particular target market (spell checker, grammar checker, character sets and fonts, runtimes, data entry programmes, calculator, currency converter, etc.) are integrated into the package.
12. The application is compiled.
13. The online help is integrated.
14. Final quality controls and tests are carried out, including mandatory, comprehensive testing of the software itself in the localised version, followed by any necessary changes and corrections.
15. A user runtime is created.
16. Installation, execution and usability testing is carried out. The online help is tested.
17. An executable version is created.
18. Final QC and validation are made effective.
19. A master is created and tested.
20. The application's documentation is reassembled.
21. The package is built.
22. The application is disseminated.

2.4.1.2 Web site localisation

Web site localisation involves cloning or pseudo-cloning after translation. Cloning means re-building the Web site using the software originally used to design the site, so that the target version has exactly the same functional and structural features as the original version (*i.e.* the same components and internal hierarchy). Pseudo-cloning entails either designing new components (which were not included in the original but are essential to ensure that all the main functional features work in the target user environment) or redesigning certain components, using different software from the one used originally and recreating a number of functional features required in the local environment, or restructuring the components to make the site more user-friendly for the target environment. The actual number of operators required will depend, as above, on the techniques used and the software available, on the technical nature of the product, and on the skills on hand for the job. The team will usually include at least one IT specialist. The job usually involves the following stages:

The shaded parts identify what the 'translators' would do as a matter of course. In fact, it is not uncommon for 'translators' to carry out the entire process single-handed.

1. The localisation environment is set up.
2. Site contents and architecture are retrieved.

3. The site functions and operation are analysed: the Web site's structure is broken down into sections and analysed. The site is tested for any malfunctions and errors (broken links, missing graphics, lack of uniformity, wrong addresses, inappropriate formats, etc.)
4. The localisation project is defined.
5. The adaptations required for the target market are identified, work specifications and the overall work schedule are drawn up.
6. The site is broken down into components.
7. The future site architecture is chosen.
8. All the different items are made ready for translation. This may involve tagging, conversions, setting up the translatable material within the appropriate hardware and software environment, etc. Further, the translator sets up the resources requires: platform, hardware, software, operators and other resources.
9. The international files are created. They include whatever does not require localisation (international images, plus anything that is fit for all languages).
10. The "images" directories are created.
11. Addresses are updated and upgraded.
12. The site is duplicated (or cloned). Folders and files are set up for each new language and the source files are transferred under their new (local) names.
13. All the links enabling circulation between the various language versions are created. Links are readdressed into the HTML or JavaScript or other files.
14. (as need be) same-type components are assembled into homogeneous sets of:
 - text or code,
 - scripts,
 - frames,
 - bars,
 - 'pop-ups', which appear only in the source for the pages (as tool tips and legends),
 - titles,
 - sound files,
 - images,
 - user interfaces,
 - other types (runtimes, databases, etc.)
15. The various components are made ready for translation (tagging, conversions, formatting, setting up into localisation environment, etc.)
16. The terminological and phraseological raw material is collected. Subject or topic studies are carried out as required.

17. The site contents are translated-localised. This means translation of:
 - Text components (pages, pop ups, titles, interface messages, database tables, etc.
 - Software components (downloadable files, access procedures, runtimes),
 - Audiovisual components database, downloadable files, access procedures, runtimes, scripts, other linked Web sites, videos, etc.).

All the components required for the target site but not already in the original then have to be created and tested.
18. The non text items (graphics – animated and still images) are adapted and reprocessed.
19. The translation is proofread and checked.
20. Functional quality tests are carried out.
21. In the case of “pseudo-cloning”: the site structure is created; the architecture is designed and built.
22. The translated (*i.e.* “localised”) elements are reintegrated into the site structure. This entails:
 - integrating translated code or text,
 - integrating the frame files,
 - integrating the titles,
 - changing the necessary links within the translated files,
 - checking the image source files in the translated files,
 - re-integrating the legends,
 - re-integrating the pop-ups,
 - creating new links when required,
 - adapting colours and user-interface if required.
23. All elements that were not present in the original but are deemed necessary for the target users are integrated and functional quality tested.
24. Offline Quality Control (functional tests are carried out on all user functions, links, short-cuts and mnemonic items, cross-checks between titles and table of contents, measurement checks). Functional tests must be carried out on as wide a variety as possible of formats and screen and navigator configurations.
25. Corrections, modifications, adaptations are made, followed by confirmation of the changes.
26. A Web-ready version is created.

27. Cultural acceptability and efficiency is tested. All necessary adaptations are made as the case may be.
28. Online Quality Control and validation are carried out.
29. (As the case may be) the main keywords that will make sure the site will be referenced by the main search engines are identified and the site is referenced.

2.4.1.3 Videogame localisation

The following is a description of the overall cycle of videogame design and localisation.

The shaded parts identify what the ‘translators’ do as a matter of course. The localisation project manager may be a translator.

a) Game design

Game design all starts with a game concept and a possible scenario the design team will turn into a playable demo so as to have a faint idea of what the actual game will look like. Publishers will make a market survey and draw up an investment plan. If the idea is validated, the game is developed by a team including:

- a scriptwriter, in charge of the story, the user manual and the scripts
- developers who will design and develop the software
- a graphics studio, to do the planning, modelling, texturing and lighting and to create the effects as well as the characters and the game’s ‘world’ and to take care of the animation.
- A sound-recording studio, to record the voices and lyrics and music.

The quality of the text, the game and the soundtrack is thoroughly tested to the point of getting a perfect ‘gold’ version. The graphics experts create the layout of the front and back of the box as well as the CDROM and user manual covers.

The advertising and marketing campaign is launched.

b) Translation-localisation into various languages

Localisation used to start once the game actually existed in the design language – usually English as a way of broadening the commercial prospects. Today, localisation tends to be carried out in parallel with the development of the *ingames*, scripts, and packagings in the design language, each component or element being sent for localisation as soon as it is ready and no longer according to a preset schedule. Frequent updates are necessary since the original version undergoes various changes in the course of development and all changes then have to be applied across the board.

The full localisation process is as follows:

1. A project manager is appointed per language.

2. The localisation project manager retrieves the elements to be localised. These include:
 - the ingames [text or dialogue components ‘embedded’ in the game],
 - the audio script [dialogues and onomatopoeia],
 - various accompaniments generally referred to as ‘packaging’ [box, back of box, CD face, user manual, user’s guide, vouchers, etc.]
3. The localisation project manager collects any applicable specifications.
4. The translation-localisation environments are set up and tested (choice of platform, hardware, software, operators, and resources).
5. Batches are made up if applicable.
6. Components are sorted out and made into sets:
 - *ingames*,
 - audio script,
 - accompaniments.
7. The localisation project manager creates the master schedule.
8. The localisation project manager recruits the translators with the required skills:
 - To localise the game, depending on the style of the game, platform type and working languages;
 - To translate the accompaniments (the skills are those required by any type of translation except if the ‘accompaniments’ include a Web site requiring special skills).
9. The translators-localisers analyse the structure and functions of the game and/or the contents of the accompanying documentation. Special attention is given to the characters and script of the game. The translation-localisation project (constraints, modes, options, etc.) is specified.
10. The translation-localisation project is validated.
11. The localisation project manager [or the translators-localisers] prepare(s) the versions for localisation and/or translation (tagging, conversions, terminology, phraseology, memories, and documentary study if applicable).
12. [as the case may be] Support versions are created.
13. The translators carry out the translation (including subtitles if applicable).
14. The translators check, proofread, revise (quality-control) the translation.
15. If applicable, the localisation project manager reassembles all translated material.
16. The sound-recording studio records the localised audio scripts.

17. The developers integrate the localised ingames and the voice and music soundtrack into the game.
18. The developers integrate the translated elements of packaging onto their respective media.
19. The localisation department receives a version of the game that includes the localised ingames and scripts.
20. The localisation department tests the localised version of the game, meaning it:
 - Checks all localised elements,
 - Controls linguistic-stylistic quality
 - Checks there is a perfect fit between scripts, *ingames* and images
 - Controls functional quality
 - Tests the ergonomics of the game
 - Qualifies the result of the translation-localisation
21. The tested version of the game is sent back to the designers/developers, with all bug reports. The designers/developers make all corrections and amendments and finalise the game (sometimes after a new round of quality controls).
22. A master is created and the packaging is printed.

Note: The localisation department is also called on to translate and localise anything related to the game itself and particularly any promotional material, information for the press and media, contents of sites that are set up for marketing and information purposes.

c) Promotion and sales

Once the localised versions have been integrated, the packagings are printed, the CDs or DVDs are burnt and the boxes created. Advertising and marketing campaigns are launched. Sites dedicated to the game are activated and media campaigns are launched.

2.4.1.4 *Translators and/or localisers?*

At that stage, there is one question outstanding: what exactly do translators do when it comes to localisation.

The obvious answer is that translators do the translating. What is for sure is that they translate all of the accompanying documentation (online help, user guide, packaging, advertising campaign, etc.) As for the rest, they also transfer and adapt the linguistic components of Web sites, software packages, and videogames. And, naturally enough, they will also be expected to take their share (the linguistic-functional one) of quality control. The translators thus normally carry out the steps highlighted by the shading in all three localisation processes above.

So far, there is nothing new to their activity. Except that their translations are ‘instrumental’, meaning they are obviously designed as (documentary) ‘tools’ in their own right or as parts of products in which they are embedded) and must therefore be fully functional. Hence the importance of testing [which is turning out to become a full-blown job in itself] and the stringency of functional quality requirements: any shortcoming or defect soon becomes blatant. At the same time, the fact that the translated material is embedded in a particular medium entails particular constraints, raises specific problems, and calls for new strategies; whence the claim that this is not simply translation.

But there is more to it than translating. Given the skills required, translators may go for a bigger share of the cake by providing a bigger share of the total localisation service. And many will want to acquire the extra skills to that purpose.

In the case of software localisation, translators will translate all of the material accompanying the software package (Readme file, installation guide, user guide, instructions manual, online help, etc.) as well as the linguistic elements embedded in the software (menus, interfaces, commands, databases, etc.). They might also do the testing and quality control. But the extra skills required to increase their share of the overall localisation service are not easily come by. They may disassemble and reassemble the application, but, barring very few exceptions, it is unlikely they will tamper with the code.

In the case of Web site cloning or pseudo-cloning, translators will translate and adapt all linguistic components and contents as well as control quality – as usual. But, this time, they may do a lot more. They may in fact, create or adapt the architecture, do the infographics, reintegrate the contents, create the links, do the online QC, and so on. This means they will write or rewrite part of the code and maybe even redefine the colour chart or the CSS. Needless to say, they may also decide to ‘localise’ everything technical and functional. ‘Localisers’ thus come somewhere between the ordinary translator and the webmaster. As a matter of fact more and more translators are in charge of creating or ‘localising’ multilingual Web sites on their own – without the help of any other operator.

Similarly, translators involved in videogame localisation will translate all of the material accompanying the videogame (packaging, helps, Web site contents, guides, etc.) and the *ingames*. They will also normally be called on to do the testing, which is particularly critical with videogames, but they will normally not have the technical skills required for any further component of the localisation process.

We may thus consider that linguistic localisers (translators) are people who translate (meaning, of course, that they adapt) the linguistic component of the product (software, videogame, Web site) to be localised and whatever ‘tools’ and documentary material go with that product, for whatever purpose. In that perspective, linguistic-cultural localisation is translation in a special situation and context. But linguistic-cultural localisation more often than not extends into other

aspects and phases of localisation, to an extent depending on the availability of the extra skills required. It extends as a matter of course into quality control and it is no surprise that translators turn into QQCE's (online quality control experts). It also extends into other skilled operations. In most cases, translators who specialise in localisation can claim they have become more than 'mere' translators.

As a rule, translators who have definitely shifted to the localisation markets rapidly take on managerial responsibilities. These range from management of the sound recording part (in film dubbing) to global localisation project management (in all situations and types of localisation). This ranges from managing part of the general process (e.g. the sound recording management function that translators take on in videogame localisation) to the global management of large-scale localisation projects of all natures and types. What actually happens is the individual translator's choice and depends on circumstances ... and skills.

2.4.2 *Media translation*

Media translation is another category of translation – which could just as well go by the name of localisation. It includes voice-over, subtitling and overtitling, and dubbing but also such new techniques as media description.

2.4.2.1 *Voice-over translation*

Voice-over is a film technique in which a person not seen on screen narrates the action, presents his or her feelings, or summarizes events.

Voice-over can be in the original language. In fact, the technique is most often used to make a film understandable to an audience that does not know the language, without having to either subtitle or dub that film.

Voice over translation is therefore either the translation of the voice-over soundtrack in the original or the 'adaptation' of the script and dialogue to produce a localised voice-over soundtrack. Voice-over translations condense the information conveyed by the soundtrack. The translation must obviously accurately reflect the original message while fitting in with what is being shown on screen. The voice-over commentary therefore needs to be perfectly synchronised with the corresponding visual sequences. Unlike dubbing, where lip synching and camera synchronisation are essential, there are no other particular constraints applicable to this kind of translation.

2.4.2.2 *Captioning*

a) **Subtitling**

Subtitling is the captioning of the translation of the spoken dialogue in the original soundtrack. Except if the translator receives a ready-for-subtitling version and just needs to convert the script into subtitles, subtitling is a rather complex operation

that varies according to available technologies in a context where things change ever so fast.

The shaded parts identify what the ‘subtitler’ does as a matter of course. Under the influence of technological changes, we have moved from a situation where the translator translated the script, with the help of a time-coded and ‘detected’ version of the film, to a situation where the subtitler does everything from A to Z – from detection to simulation and sometimes even mastering – all on the same workstation.

The subtitling process is as follows:

1. The translator/subtitler gets the tape or copy of the documentary, advert, movie, cartoon, etc. and the script.
2. The translator/subtitler gets the specifications
3. The translator/subtitler views the video.
4. The translator/subtitler sets up the subtitling environment.
5. The translator/subtitler creates a version for subtitling by:
 - transferring the material onto a convenient medium (*e.g.* converting the film to video with time-codes – chronological cues that make it possible to identify frames and therefore know exactly when a dialogue element starts and ends),
 - converting the material into a usable format (*e.g.* digitizing the video or film so that it can be processed by means of a particular subtitling software)
6. The translator/subtitler sets up the version for subtitling in the subtitling environment.
7. The translator/subtitler creates the version for translation through detection or cueing.

“Detection” or “cueing” consists in spotting the start (Time-code in or TC in) and end (Time-code out or TC out) of the dialogues as well as the camera shifts and the title cards or captions. Detection provides an opportunity to check the typescript against the actual dialogues. The translator can thus:

 - mark the script with the beginnings and ends of the dialogue sequences and the screen shots,
 - segment the dialogues and cards or captions,
 - use a dedicated software package to set up the subtitle matrices which, in sync with the images, give the number of characters for each subtitle.

The time-code in and time-code out for each item of dialogue determine the duration (reading time) of each item and its position.

8. The translator reads the presentation of the characters, the story and the script.
9. The translator creates the subtitles (translates). This is usually referred to as 'adapting' the subtitles. The main limitation here is the speed at which the viewer can read the subtitles, compared with the speed of speech, which means that the subtitles have to be condensed accordingly.
10. The translator produces a subtitle file or keys the subtitles in if the software so warrants.
11. The translator proofreads and checks the subtitle.
12. The translator makes any necessary correction.
13. Simulation [a sort of trial run where the subtitles are integrated into the videotape] provides the opportunity to view the subtitles in real time and to check that they 'fit in', are accurate, visible, readable, 'good' and efficient and do not contravene any of the rules of the art [*e.g.* no shot change overruns]. The simulation phase is usually carried out in the presence of all the various people involved in the making of the film or video (director, producer, etc.). Simulation may include synchronisation of the copy to be subtitled and the subtitled copy (synchronisation is checked shot by shot, changes in the size or position of the subtitles may be made, unreadable subtitles are repositioned, etc.)
14. If need be, the translator corrects, adapts, modifies the translation, in which case a new simulation will be carried out.
15. The subtitles are validated.
16. The subtitles are transferred to film according to the chosen technique (*e.g.* burning, engraving, other) and a master copy is created.
17. If required, the film is specially processed to ensure optimum subtitle quality.
18. The final product is viewed and passed for release once the quality is approved

Note: Live subtitling for the deaf and hearing-impaired does not require translation as the aim is to display a written version of dialogue or voice over commentary. This may imply some degree of simplification and the loss of specific features such as regional accents. The subtitles are displayed according to a conventional colour code so that viewers know which words are meant to be dialogue, internal monologue or voice-over commentary.

b) Overtitling

Overtitling refers to the technique used in some operas and theatres, where the actors' or singers' words are displayed above the stage. This is the 'live' equivalent of subtitling, except that the words must be synchronised manually with the action taking place on stage. The overtitler will obviously use the libretto and, whenever possible, existing translations of the work, but the titles have to be adapted to the

particular production and stage directions (for instance, the director may require certain cuts in the original work). The overtitles may also have to fit particular actors' or singers' personalities (rather flamboyant overtitles may not fit a rather wooden performance for instance, unless the director is seeking a deliberate effect). Duos and choral parts present particular difficulties as the different parts must remain clearly identified though contrasting colours may come in handy.

Overtitles may be likened to the contents of a PowerPoint presentation displayed item by item on a specially designed 'linear screen'. All that has to be done is create the overtitles in advance and then display them as the vocal action proceeds. The source is the libretto or the text itself.

Live overtitling requires a lot of mental agility and typing dexterity, plus special software functions warranting immediate automatic display on completion of each overtitle.

2.4.2.3 *Dubbing*

In dubbing, the creation of a localised version to replace the original version is organised in the following sequence of operations, many of which are carried out by the translators or 'authors' as they are usually called.

Today, in most cases, translators-adapters (authors) normally take care of the various steps and stages highlighted by shading in the list below. They may also assume managerial responsibilities acting, as happens with videogame localisation, as assistants to the sound-recording manager or the overall project manager.

The process is initiated by a distributor buying the right to produce a foreign-language version. It begins with the hiring of a dubbing supervisor or director.

1. Onset. The dubbing director receives a master of the audiovisual product that will be dubbed. For the sake of simplicity and convenience, the master may be duplicated on a video tape.
2. Team setup. The dubbing director sets up the team, including one specialist at least for each of the following stages:
 - detection,
 - adaptation,
 - calligraphy (if dubbing done manually),
 - scheduling of artists and comedians,
 - recording,
 - mixing,
 - layback.
3. Transcription. If the original script is not available on paper, a transcript is made.
4. Reception. The translator-adapter-writer receives the medium for dubbing, together with the script and any relevant accompaniment.

Note: In some cases, the dubbing director receives a translation of the script. That translation has been done by 'ordinary' translators who did not have to pay any attention to synchronisation: they were simply requested to do a faithful translation of the original. It is then the dubbing team's responsibility to adapt that translation to comply with the requirements of the film situations and of synchronisation (and then to synchronise it).

5. Brief. The translator-adapter-writer obtains the specifications.
6. Viewing. The translator-adapter-writer views the medium for dubbing.
7. Environment. The dubbing environment (platform, hardware, software and various resources) is set up.
8. Version for dubbing. A version for dubbing is set up to accompany the script. This means:
 - transferring the material on to a working medium (*e.g.* time-coded VHS),
 - converting the material into the proper format (*e.g.* digitising and/or adapting the material to the format requirements of the software used).
9. Setup. The version for dubbing is set up in the dubbing environment. This means either:
 - Loading the image tape into the virtual rythmo tape.
 - Loading a tape into the rythmo tape projector [a projector showing a line of text or time reference (time coding) at the bottom of the screen, scrolling in sync with the main projector thanks to a time reference converter] in case of manual dubbing.
10. Detection. This consists in detecting (by their time codes) and marking the following on the tape:
 - 'loops' – brief (15 to 50 seconds) excerpts from scenes,
 - shot changes,
 - sentences in and sentences out,
 - breathing noises, laughter, shouts,
 - movements of the lips as well as mouth opening and closing movements on which to synchronize the dialogues since the viewer would be dismayed by discrepancies between what he sees and what he hears – meaning a labial in the localised version must be substituted for a labial in the international version.

Detection also entails identifying (and marking) each character's dialogue so that everyone knows who says what, where, in which time span. All of the dialogues spoken by a given character thus appear on the same line on the rythmo tape and are uniformly colour coded.
11. Translation-adaptation of dialogue and other elements in the script. This means:

The adapter rewrites the dialogues directly onto the time-coded image tape, making sure everything is in sync. The dubbing software automatically generates the calligraphy, the script, and the tabular representation of the dialogues for the respective characters.

If the software is not available, the adapter uses a word processor to create one file indicating the TC In and TC out for each tape element.

12. Proofreading and quality control, with required corrections and changes and conformity checks.
13. Simulation. The translator-adapter reads the translation aloud as it is displayed on the rythmo tape to make sure everything is in sync.
14. As the case may be, reintegration of the dialogue file into the rythmo tape.
15. If dubbing is carried out manually:
 - a. Calligraphy [manual transcription of the dialogues onto the tape] or export of the text of the dialogues.
 - b. Creation of the work schedules.
16. The result is sent to the recording studio so that the actors/comedians can record the dubbed version. This can be done by exporting the dialogue file or sending the rythmo tape with the translated dialogues and the character parts.
17. The post-production manager recruits a sound studio (recording) manager.
18. The sound recording manager hires the comedians/actors.
19. The sound recording manager sets up a studio recording schedule.
20. The sound engineer deletes all dialogues, noises, sounds of laughter or sobs, breathing noises, hiccups, dogs barking, etc. from the IV (international version) that includes the music and sound effects.
21. Recording. The comedians/actors record the dialogues. They proceed one loop after the other. Loops are numbered in sequence. On each loop, symbols indicate shot changes, opening and closing of the mouth, laughter, coughs, kisses, whether the character breathes through the mouth or through the nose, etc.

Given that the comedians/actors have not read the script nor viewed the film, the recording manager must provide advice and guidance. Furthermore, the scenes are not recorded in chronological sequence.

The comedians/actors view the original version for a given scene and record the dialogue. If this is satisfactory, they move on to the next scene. If not, the recording manager gives fresh indications and instructions to the comedians/actors (the dialogues may even be modified) and a new recording of the loop is made. Having to make different takes naturally is a time-consuming process.

22. Mixing. The now 'local version' soundtrack is mixed and resynchronised to include 'localised' noises and effects (ringing phone, TV, distant shout, background noises, etc.). The point is to get a perfect sync of images and voices. The dubbed lines are also balanced with the original background.

A new round of quality controls and testing usually takes place here.

23. The local version is transferred onto the international version to create the ultimate local version.
24. The finalised local version is sent to the post-production manager.
25. Layback (video) or mastering. The final audio mix (usually a print master) is transferred back onto the video edit master.
26. A master copy of the film integrating the local soundtrack is created.
27. As the case may be, the dubbing studio applies for any required visas from the relevant authorities.
28. The final copies are created.

Notes: Dubbing is a perfect example of the problems that translators come across for cultural reasons. Thus, for instance, the translator-adapter-localiser must be on the lookout for references the audience in a given country might not understand, pay attention to colloquialisms, beware of jokes (decide whether they can be dropped and, if not, how the sound gap can be filled). Sometimes, too, the translated dialogues must either leave implicit things that are actually said in the original or, on the contrary, make explicit what is implicit in the original. Much of the adapting can also be done through the choice of accents and rhythm of speech or any target language and verbal behaviour peculiarities while matching the body language and expressions in the original. To crown it all, audiences in different countries also have different expectations about the balance of dialogue and sound effects – some will definitely not want any part of the dialogue to be covered by sound effects; others do not care.

In fact, the dubbing process is a very long and complicated process of adapting the localised script to cultural, linguistic, and **technical** constraints. How this is achieved depends on whether or not the team starts with a translation of the script by one or more translators, then adapts the translation, with the adapter and the translators holding frequent meetings where they go over the translation and adaptation over and over again until the dialogue is 'natural' and matches the action and characters to perfection. The translation and dialogues have to be 'spoken' and repeatedly checked, and amended. Even at the recording stage, amendments and adaptations have to be made to the script. To get an idea of the complexity of the recording (starting with the complexity of building up a workable schedule that is acceptable to all concerned), one just has to imagine the number of different characters and interactions in a movie or video.

The whole point is that the slightest defect in the translation and sound track will immediately have an adverse effect on the audiences. Hence the obsessive attention of the dubbing team (dubbing manager, translators, adapter, sound engineers, actors/comedians, and others) to the slightest cultural, linguistic and technical detail. The exercise is particularly difficult because the translated sequence has to fit both with the duration of the original speech sequence and any visible lip movements (whenever the actor's face can be seen). This can be daunting, especially with certain languages. The technique is also referred to as 'lip synching'. 3-D graphic applications may soon remove part of the difficulty by making it possible to change the original lip movements to fit the dubbed version.

The translation process from A to Z

Introduction

The actual work carried out by the translator and his partners consists of a long and complex sequence of operations that will work out well if two essential conditions are fulfilled:

1. a true partnership exists between the translator and the work provider (the translator's in-house or external client), and,
2. whenever required (*i.e.* unless the translator is totally self-sufficient), there is true co-operation between the translator and the proof-reader or reviser.

This chapter describes the **full translation sequence from A to Z**. The sequence is broken down into separate operations, in chronological order, and specifies the respective parts played by the translator, the work provider and the reviser at each stage in the process. In practice, this amounts to a quality assurance protocol model applied to translation. The model has been implemented at Rennes 2 University (France) since 1986, by the *Centre de Formation de Traducteurs-localiseurs, terminologues et rédacteurs* (University Center for the Training of Translators, Terminologists and Technical writers) and was used as the basis for the quality assurance model described in the European PERFEQT project (*ProcedurEs and Rules For Enhanced Quality in Translation* – MLIS 3010 (24928)). It is now known as DG94/R₂T applicable to translations and available in French at www.qualitrad.net.

Please note:

'Translator' refers to all those involved in the actual translation process (the translator and anyone working on her/his 'side'). This includes:

- the project manager, responsible for managing the translation on the translator's side of the operation,
- the translation company's marketing service,
- the translation company's accounting or finance department (responsible for invoicing the client),
- the terminologist employed by the translation company or paid by the translator,

- the documentation researcher and manager,
 - the proof-reader,
 - the reviser, if hired by the translator or by the translation company,
 - the data or CAP operator hired by the translator or by the translation company,
 - the IT engineer or technician working for the translator,
 - any information provider questioned by the translator,
- plus anyone else directly involved in the process on the translator's side.

'Work provider' refers to any operator working on behalf of the work provider, including:

- the project manager on the work provider's side,
 - the work provider's purchasing department,
 - the work provider's accounting or finance department (responsible for payments or invoices),
 - the terminologist or pre-translator hired by the work provider,
 - the documentation researcher and manager working on behalf of the work provider,
 - any proof-reader on the work provider's side,
 - any reviser on the work provider's side,
 - any data or CAP operator hired by the work provider,
 - any IT engineer or technician working on behalf of the work provider,
 - any information provider commissioned by the work provider,
- plus anyone else directly involved in the process on the work provider's side.

Please note: The work flow sequence described below only includes those operations directly related to the translation process itself: it therefore includes the estimate, but not the financial and accounting operations generated by each job of work.

The work flow sequence describes the **entire translation process cycle** as it should **theoretically** take place between the moment the need for translation arises and the moment the translated material is made available to its end-users in the required form and on the appropriate medium. It includes the whole process of translation service provision, *i.e.* **all the operations performed by 'translator'** (as defined above), between the moment he sets out to seek a contract or a translation and the moment the finished translation is delivered and no longer requires the translator's attention (bar any follow-up queries). Whenever one of the translator's two partners in the process is in default or missing, the translator is assumed to take over. This is a full expansion of the summary flowchart of Chapter 1.

The different operations are numbered in sequence. All of the operations listed are potentially applicable to every situation of translation but not all will

necessarily apply when one particular translator and one particular reviser do a particular translation job for one particular client.

1. Finding the job of work

1.1 Before the translation service provision cycle gets underway

1. The (future) **work provider** produces, or comes into possession of, material which needs to be translated in part or in whole (the material may have been or be produced on the work provider's behalf or received from some other source).

This generates the specific translation requirement.

In theory, any material that has to be translated should have been subjected to rigorous quality control procedures at the time of production. In practice, this is often not the case.

Circumstances allowing, advice on internationalization of the material should be sought from a translator while the product or process or its documentation is being designed.

Simultaneously:

2. The **translator** or the translation company, and the **reviser** if the latter is an independent operator, implement all the requirements for quality assurance (*i.e.* training, self-tuition, collection of re-usable resources, consolidation of raw materials – including terminology and translation memories).
3. If need be, the **translator** or the **reviser** or the translation company carries out the necessary steps to be awarded quality assurance certification (ISO 9000+, DIN 2345, EN15038, R₂T, ...)
4. The **translator** (or the sales person in the translation company) looks for contracts, makes offers, contacts potential or former clients, answers calls for tenders, advertises, etc. Unless the targets are specifically defined by calls for tenders, prospecting will cover a wide range of potential clients. The general conditions of sale are of paramount importance here since they will be communicated to all prospects.

The freelance **reviser** will also look for work by contacting translators or other work providers who may commission him to revise translations.

5. In some cases, the **work provider** will anticipate on future translation needs by selecting and vetting potential sub-contractors, or even including the latter in the quality assurance certification process. A professional **reviser** may be asked to carry out this vetting process on behalf of the work provider.

The prior recruitment of future or potential translators (and of any other operators) is based on the services they can offer, on their strong points, on their professional record, on their references, and more often than not, on the basis of the results of translation tests.

Pre-recruited translators may be ‘accredited’ for certain types of jobs requiring specific qualifications or qualities, as for instance, if the material is particularly sensitive or confidential.

1.2 Once the translation ‘requirement’ has been identified

6. The **work provider** opens a job file and a job account, which will include all the information relating to the job in hand.

Simultaneously,

7. In cases where the **reviser** is commissioned to work on behalf of the work provider, the former will open the job file and/or account prior to starting work on the job.
8. The **work provider** specifies the nature of the job in hand, describing the source material (type, subject area, volume, source language, etc.) and the requirements for completion of the translation task. This entails setting a budget and deadlines and defining specific demands and requirements as completely and precisely as possible. In the best case scenario, this may mean writing down fully comprehensive specifications for the job.

When circumstances allow, the work provider sets dates for part deliveries in addition to the final delivery date.

If the work provider has decided to split the job into batches and allot the batches to different operators, a schedule for delivery of the batches has to be set-up. *If the requirement for translation is in any way related to any other service provision concerning the material to be translated or any material in the same family*, this must be made known to anyone concerned, so that each operator is aware of possible harmonisation and deadline problems (to allow the different batches to be synchronised).

9. Having defined the requirements for the job, the work provider may either:
 - delegate the project management to a sub-contractor (possibly including the selection of the operators required for the job),
 - recall operators (translators and proof-readers and/or revisers) who have already done work for him,
 - call up the operators that he has recruited or selected in advance,
 - start looking for the operators required for the job (either to short-list them or to commission them for the job).

10. The **translator** or the translation company tenders for contracts. In the present case, that would mean that the translator answers a call for tenders detailing the specifications for the job.

Freelance **revisers** may tender for revision contracts. In most cases however, they will be contacted by translators or by work providers or, in a translation service or company, be chosen by the project manager.

2. Getting the translation

2.1 Finding the operators

11. The **work provider** forwards the request for translation to potential operators (*i.e.* translators and revisers), who may have already been identified, contacted, selected or recruited in anticipation of the need for translation. The request includes the following:

- the source material to be translated (if not the definitive version, at least a representative sample of the material for initial assessment),
- the work provider's general purchase conditions – conditions applicable to all purchases of services by the work provider,
- any brief or job specifications (special requirements and conditions) already available at this stage.

12. The **translator** receives the request for translation with all relevant accompaniments.

If previously contacted, the **reviser** will also receive the requirements and all the items making up the request for translation + revision.

13. The **translator**:

- opens or re-opens the client's file, then
- opens a job file and/or job account within the client's file.

If previously contacted, the **reviser**:

- opens or re-opens the client's file, then
- opens a job file and/or job account within the client's file.

14. A project manager may be assigned to the job on the **translator's side**. The project manager will be in charge of supervising the whole operation, starting with the estimate for the job (that estimate will be part of the 'business offer').

The **project manager** on the translator's side will be referred to below as the **translator**.

15. A **manager** may be assigned to the job on the **work provider's side**, as the case may be. He will be responsible for supervising the translation, and will start by negotiating with the translator.

The **job manager** (or file manager or contract manager) on the work provider's side will be referred to below as the **work provider**.

16. The **translator** decides whether the translation is relevant, by confirming that, to the best of his knowledge, the material has not already been partly or totally translated.
17. The **translator** examines the work provider's request, with a view to providing an accurate (realistic) estimate for the job.

To do this, the **translator** will request all the explanations, information, and details that the work provider can supply, in order to determine as precisely as possible *what the source material consists of*, and *the full and precise nature of the work required*, unless of course, this has already been specified in full. The work provider will, as a rule, provide the translator with one or more representative **samples** of the material, so the latter can get a fair idea of the task involved and of the time it will take.

In the course of this exchange, the **translator** may also ask the work provider to check that the material can be exported/imported into the target cultural, political, cultural environment (the context in which the translation will be received and put to use). This may in particular involve asking whether anything that is likely to be affected by various national laws and regulations has been considered and the appropriate authorisations have been applied for. The work provider should also be asked to take account of all the mandatory warnings and disclaimers which will apply in the given national context. At this juncture, the translator should also, if relevant, make the work provider aware of possible misunderstandings that might arise in the target culture.

18. The **translator** studies the request and analyzes the work provider's needs and requirements. This may involve:
- asking for additional information;
 - checking that the material has not already been translated, in part or in whole;
 - looking up related material (documents in the same family, previous translations, etc.)
 - deciding, with the work provider, what type of translation is best suited to the particular needs and situation and how best to carry out the job;
 - sizing the material to precisely determine the volume of the translation, being careful to inform the work provider of the method and tool used.
19. The **translator** then makes a rough estimate of how long the job will take by:

- estimating the workload;
- choosing the appropriate tools for the job;
- working out how many operators will be needed;
- estimating the time needed to complete the job to the standard required;
- determining the *most cost-effective way* of carrying out the job in terms of tools, operators, productivity, quality, etc.

If already contacted, the **reviser** carries out the same calculations and assessment in order to draw up the estimate for the revision part – all the more easily as his services are more limited than those of the translator but with the constraint that there is no way he can, at that point, estimate the ‘level’ and, therefore, quantity of revision that will actually be required.

20. The **work provider** answers any extra queries by the translator and **reviser**. This part of the process requires a spirit of open dialogue and negotiation, as the translator may for instance at this stage require an extension of the time limit for the job or ask the work provider to supply specific equipment or software or other resources.
21. The **translator** draws up the business offer and estimate for the job. The *offer* specifies how the translator intends to carry out the work in hand, while the *estimate* states how much the service will be charged. The translator’s business offer will be accompanied as a matter of routine by a document stating the translator’s general conditions of service provision.
22. If previously contacted, the **reviser** sends his own offer and estimate to the work provider. The translator’s business offer will be accompanied as a matter of routine by a document stating the reviser’s general conditions of service provision.
23. *The work provider receives the business offers and can then, alternatively:*
 - select the operator, if there are several competing offers, or
 - accept the offer submitted by the previously selected translator or reviser, or
 - *request a trial (test) translation/revision.*

If the work provider decides on the latter:

24. The **work provider** (or the **reviser** acting on behalf of the work provider) designs and organizes the test or trial.
25. The **translator** (or the **reviser** acting on behalf of the translator) carries out the test.
26. The work provider (or his appointed reviser):
 - assesses the results of the test;
 - selects the operator(s) on the basis of the test results;
 - certifies the operator(s) if certification is required.

2.2 Once the operator or operators have been confirmed

27. If need be, the selected **operator or operators** put some additional questions to the work provider and/or reviser to make sure all applicable conditions and constraints have been set out (to fine tune the agreement).

28. On the basis of the answers received, the **translator** may submit a final offer to the work provider, along with the final estimate.

In the best case scenario, this offer will be accepted as the basis for contractual agreement. It will stand as a first-level job specification which then may be added to after further analysis of the job in hand.

The **reviser** may draw up his own offer and estimate, as the case may be.

29. The **work provider** accepts the translator's or translation company's offer.

The contract between the translator and the work provider is formed the moment the work provider has formally accepted the translator's offer either by simply signing the estimate or by issuing an order form (below).

The work provider also accepts the reviser's offer, as the case may be.

30. The **work provider** issues one or several order forms or documents with the same legal effect.

31. The **translator** receives the order form and accepts the work provider's order.

Once the translator has formally accepted the order, there exists a binding business relationship between the work provider and the translator.

If applicable, the **reviser** receives a separate purchase order form and accepts the work provider's order.

32. The **work provider** and the **translator** on the one hand, and the **work provider** and the **reviser** on the other hand, as the case may be, agree on the terms of the contract. It used to be the rule that contracts remained implicit but it is becoming more and more obvious that **the conditions, form and medium of the contract must be formally agreed by all parties to it.**

The agreement or contract should include, among other things, the general specifications (those that apply for any job), and, whenever possible, the particular specifications (those that apply specifically for the job in hand). The time limits and schedules and the financial conditions must be stated most unambiguously.

33. As the case may be:

- the **work provider** appoints a job manager and, if the agreement says he has to take care of the revision, hires one or several revisers.

The job manager becomes the exclusive contact person for the translator or translation company for any matter relating to the job in hand.

The translator should always be given the name of the contact person (on the work provider's side) for the job in hand.

- the **translation company** appoints a project manager and, if the agreement says the company has to take care of the revision, hires or appoints one or several revisers.

The project manager becomes the exclusive contact person for the work provider for any matter relating to the job in hand. *The work provider should always be given the name of the contact person (on the translator's side) for the job in hand.*

34. If the reviser is selected at this juncture, he opens a job file and/or job account for the job in hand.

3. Preparing, planning and organizing the job

3.1 Preparing the translation (localisation, subtitling, etc.) kit

35. The **work provider** assembles the various elements that make up the translation kit, namely, at least:

- the source material (in its original form, or in a 'for translation' or 'support' version),
- any product to which the source material refers,
- any material related to the source material (previous version, document relating to the same subject, etc.),
- any relevant applicable **translation memory or memories**, and any document relating to the same subject with its translation, which can possibly be fed into a translation memory,
- any material which has to be integrated into the translation (in cases where a prior version is being partly re-edited or when homogeneity with a prior version is required, or when the translation must include 'mandatory' notices such as a notice of conformity with specific safety regulations, etc.),
- ancillary resources designed to help the translator, including all useful documents (or at least an indication of where they can be found: URL, physical location, names of persons to contact, etc.), the relevant software and any document having relevance to the lifecycle of the product or processes referred to in the material to be translated,
- any available directions or specifications (including, for instance, the reference of the material that will serve as the benchmark for homogeneity) and, whenever possible, the **full** specifications for the translation,
- a delivery schedule planning (a) deliveries of the source material from the work provider to the translator, and (b) deliveries of the translated material from the translator to the work provider,

- a list of related jobs (jobs depending on the job in hand) as for instance, parallel batch translations,
 - any **style specifications** (style guide) and relevant formatting instructions,
 - as the case may be, the indication of whatever document or material is to serve as the reference for homogenisation of the translation as when it is stipulated, for instance, that the text of the slides in the presentation must take absolute precedence over any other options,
 - in the case of a localization or subtitling kit: the scripts and all the relevant programs, files, menus, messages, codes, etc.
36. The **work provider** assembles any additional resources likely to be of use to the translator, or the reviser, as the case may be.
37. If need be, the **work provider** makes sure that backup and safety copies of the source material are made (photocopies, file back-ups, records of documents) and that all safety operations - anti-virus checks, extraction of non-text items, page number checks, tag locking, etc. are carried out.
38. In theory, the **work provider** should check the quality of the source material and ensure that all necessary corrections are made. Source material should always be quality assured.
39. If need be, the **work provider** produces a specific version for translation.
A specific *version for translation* may consist of a printed version of the file, the script of the video or game, a digital version of the text, a version from which all non-text items have been removed, a version including spaces for future illustrations, or where all the marker tags have been locked to avoid deletion during translation or a version from which any identification of the company requesting the translation has been deleted. In most cases the operator in charge of preparing the version for translation will identify and process any previously translated sections or create a specific file containing only the parts to be translated, etc. To be more precise, the result is a version for translation *or retranslation* – since some of the existing material that is being reused may have to be upgraded, as when part of the translation memory is just not adequate.
40. The **work provider** may also produce a support version.
The support version is one in which the work provider embeds various markers indicating how to deal with such specific items as menu options, proper names, book or document titles, business names, brands and trademarks, units and figures, dates, legends, etc. It also generally includes the terminology (or part of it) and, in some cases, the phraseological templates or matrices. The subtitler's support version, for instance, includes the script and a time-coded version of the video.

A support version is particularly useful when the translator uses a dictating machine or voice recognition software. In this particular case, a pre-processed support version will include the necessary terminology and phraseology to ensure that the translation is homogeneous and that the translator can keep up a certain speed.

The support version may be produced by the **reviser** acting on behalf of the work provider.

41. If need be, the **work provider** (or the **reviser** acting on behalf of the work provider) sets up the necessary translation environment. This is always the case when the translator works on the work provider's premises.
42. The **work provider** forwards the translation/localisation/subtitling 'kit' and any additional resources deemed to be useful for the translator and/or the reviser, to the translator (or to the translation company).

Different items or kits may be dispatched to different operators according to the type of material that has to be translated and the operators' expertise.

3.2 Receiving and checking the translation/localisation/subtitling kit

43. The **translator** (or the translation company) receives, or takes delivery of, the various items in the translation/localisation/subtitling kit.
44. The **translator** (or the translation company) checks the kit and makes a list of what might be missing.
45. The **translator** (or the translation company) looks for whatever is missing on the basis of the list. This might include:
 - looking for related documents,
 - looking up archive material,
 - requesting additional resources from the work provider.
46. As the case may be, the **translator** processes the documents as previously described (including de-zipping, antivirus checks, duplication/printing, creation of a specific folder for the job on the Intranet, file conversion and saving, back-ups, etc.)
47. The **translator** saves or records a back-up version of the master file or copy in order to avoid any risk of irreparable damage to the source material (there is no guarantee the work provider has kept a copy!).
48. If this has not already been done by the work provider (step 38), the **translator** sets up a version for translation including only those parts which are due for translation or retranslation, breaking it down, according to need, into sub-files containing series of similar items, and carrying out all the operations required to make the material readily 'translatable'.

A version for translation must be produced whenever the material cannot be translated unless it is converted to another format, disassembled, and all tags have been frozen or new tags have been inserted. In the case of subtitling, for instance, the time-codes for the start and finish of each dialog item must be identified and noted. Whenever code or digital material is translated, unless dedicated software is available, preparing the version for translation involves a complex series of actions on tags and formats.

49. In some cases – when the actual volume is significantly higher or lower than in the version used as a basis for the cost estimate, as for instance if certain sections are found to have already been translated – the **translator** resizes the material **which will actually be translated**.

When the source material turns out not to be what the work provider had originally described, the translator is entitled to ask for a re-assessment of the cost and deadlines, failing which the contract may be considered null and void.

Note. Sizing and resizing the various components of the version for translation establishes the basis for planning the job in hand.

3.3 Reaching final agreement

50. If need be, the **translator** and the **work provider** renegotiate the deadlines and/or the cost of the job in view of the new quantity or volume calculations.
51. The **work provider**, the **translator** and the **reviser** come to a final agreement on:

- the general conditions and the specific conditions applicable to the job in hand,
- the schedule and the deadlines applicable to each player,
- the translation options (unless the latter have already been agreed on at an earlier stage in the negotiations),
- the terms of payment,
- the resources needed to complete the job,
- the procedures applicable.

52. The **translator** signs a confidentiality and intellectual property agreement recognizing the rights of the work provider and protecting his own rights.

53. The **translator** and the work provider together define and confirm the translation options, directives and specifications.

Ideally, the **work provider** provides a complete set of instructions or specifications. Failing that, the specifications are agreed by the work provider on the basis of suggestions put forward by the translator as to which options would be most appropriate, and why.

3.4 Setting up and testing the translation environment

54. The **translator** or the **work provider** sets up and tests the translation environment (work station, hardware extensions, navigators, databases, software packages, tools, aids, etc.) in accordance with the demands and requirements of the job in hand (subtitling, localization, dictated translation, etc.).

3.5 Planning the translation

55. The **translator** plans the job.
The work schedule takes into account the batch delivery dates, the deadlines, and the necessities of synchronizing the job in hand with other related jobs that precede, accompany, or follow the job in hand.
56. Once the schedule and the working arrangements for the job have been agreed on, the **translator** (or the translation company) can set up the master schedule.
A master schedule is essential when several batches of a same job are being translated in parallel or in succession by several different translators.
 - a) The **translator** or the project **planner** draws up the list and descriptions of all the operations that need to be carried out, according to the work provider's prescriptions and to the needs of the end user(s).
This list must include all the stages required to ensure compliance with agreed quality standards, plus all the preparatory phases (for instance, a study of the product or of the process by the translator or a training session organized by the work provider).
 - b) The **translator** or the project **planner** identifies the materials concerned by the different stages, makes up the batches, and assigns those batches to different operators (this is called *'batch allocation'*)
 - c) The **translator** or the project **planner** determines the order in which the different operations will be carried out on the different batches or on the same batch (this is called *sequencing*).
 - d) The **translator** or the project **planner** works out the start and end dates for the different stages (and for the whole process) (this is called *scheduling*).
Scheduling can be determined either by working backwards from a deadline (back scheduling) or by working forwards from a fixed starting date (forward scheduling).
 - e) The translator or the project planner determines the nature and quantities of the resources (the operators, equipment, software, documentation, time and costs) required to carry out the different stages of the job and to complete it within the time limit set. All resources must be taken into account.

- f) The translator or the project planner allocates the resources to the various planned operations so that all the necessary resources calculated in e) are available to carry out the various tasks in line with specifications. (This is called *resource allocation*)

57. The master schedule is forwarded to the **work provider** and the **reviser** so they can plan their own share of the work. The **work provider** and the **reviser** plan their own contributions (for example: loan of software by the work provider, validation of the terminology by the reviser or the work provider, corrections by the translator).

The master schedule specifies:

1. who does what
 2. on which materials or sections of the materials
 3. starting when
 4. for how long (ending when)
 5. with what means and resources
 6. following which prior operation
 7. preceding which subsequent operation
 8. in relation with which other operation(s)
- and also to whom the result is passed on.

58. If need be, the **translator** or the project **planner** issues the relevant work orders applicable to each batch, carrying all the necessary information and specifications: dates, resource requirements and availability, etc.

4. Preparing the translation

4.1 Making the source material available

59. The **translator** or the **reviser** takes charge of the source material and, if need be, forwards the relevant batches to the different operators responsible for dealing with different sections or aspects (this is referred to as *dispatching*).

4.2 Analysing the source material

60. The **translator** or the **reviser** checks the quality of the source material. The material has to be passed as 'translation-ready'.
The translator checks that the material is:

- a) up to standard (*i.e.* that it contains no language-related or fact-related errors and that is a functional document). This assessment is not required

if the work provider has certified that the material is up to standard before forwarding it to the translator, as is normally required,

and

- b) that the material is in fact translatable either by human means or by machine translation.

This 'translatability assessment' will differ according to whether the material is due to be translated by human translators or by machine translation, but it should always cover every aspect of the source material, including:

- physical aspect,
- subject,
- format,
- readability,
- usability without risk of damage,
- contents,
- organisation and structure,
- type of discourse,
- ancillary and related material,
- appendices and 'non text' material.

61. The **translator** analyses the source material.

This will include:

- a) identifying any anomalies or real or possible errors,
- b) making a note of any questions that – circumstances permitting – will be put to the author or designer of the source material or the work provider or information providers,
- c) identifying any item which is not fully understood or which requires further documentation – and creating an index of such items,
- d) identifying any items calling for special attention, in particular all those where several options may be open to the translator (for instance: should measurement units be converted?),
- e) listing all the terminology and phraseology requiring specific treatment, *i.e.* where the translator knows that:
 - equivalent items in the target language will have to be researched;
 - specific in-house terminology or phraseology will need to be provided (or validated) by the work provider;
 - homogeneity or consistency may be at risk;
 - multiple variants may give rise to disagreement, either among translators or with the work provider.

While analysing the material, the **translator** creates separate indexes for all the items requiring further research. These include:

- all apparent anomalies, ambiguities and real or supposed defects in the material to be translated,
- areas and topics which need to be documented (*i.e.* where the translator requires further knowledge of the concept or subject),
- terminology and phraseology for which equivalent terms and phrases need to be found in the target language,
- items calling for non standard treatment or which can be quite rightly translated in more than one way (choice of options).

62. The **translator** clears up all the seemingly obscure or ambiguous points which can be clarified by thorough analysis of the material on hand.
63. The **translator** requests guidance (or confirmation of choices) as to non-standard or optional translations.
64. The **work provider** and/or the **reviser** acting on behalf of the work provider indicates which specific options should be followed by the translator and, as the case may be, what compensation should be introduced in relation to some options (*i.e.* using a footnote where an acronym has been retained as in the original).
65. The **translator** asks the work provider to provide access to the resources needed to obtain the information required, and/or finds the resources through other channels.
66. If required, the **reviser** validates all the indexes compiled by the translator.
67. The **translator** updates the guidelines and translation options on the basis of the answers provided by the **work provider**.

4.3 Acquiring the knowledge and information required

68. The work provider supplies the translator with all the resources needed to understand the source material, to find the sources of information and to prepare the groundwork for the translation.

Normally, this kind of information should already have been made available with the translation ‘kit’, but detailed analysis of the source material sometimes reveals new or additional problems.

69. The **translator** clears up any particularly difficult ‘grey areas’ and undertakes a technical study of the subject concerned or tries to find additional documentation on the subject. Whenever feasible, he undertakes a study of the product or the process or the subject in the source material.

The technical study may be a briefing session, a discussion with a domain specialist, a workshop visit, a demonstration of the product, or even a

training session to learn to use the product, process, device or technique concerned.

The translator applies standard subject research and documentation procedures. The research will be based on the index of items drawn up during the analysis phase and will include technical information and general background knowledge on the subject area (particularly information available *via* the Internet).

70. Depending on the terms of the agreement, the **work provider**, or the **reviser** acting on the work provider's behalf, or the **translator**, upgrades the source material.

This entails taking into account any defects noticed during the analysis and documentation phases, and correcting any discrepancies or errors in the source material which could affect the quality of the translation.

These changes are not technically part of the translation process. They mean additional work and an extra charge should be made on a *pro rata* basis according to the time spent on corrections and changes.

4.4 Setting up the raw materials

To complement whatever already came in the translation/localisation/subtitling kit, the **translator** will have to seek out the raw materials needed to complete the translation, including:

- models and templates that can be used to organise the documents,
- templates for discourse structure and organisation,
- terminology and phraseology collated according to the work provider's or the reviser's specifications,
- translation memories.

71. The **work provider** (or the **reviser** acting on behalf of the work provider) provides the **translator** with all the existing resources that can be made available and/or allows the translator access to the relevant resources.
72. The **translator** assembles all the resources needed to 'mine out' the necessary raw materials.
73. The **translator** uses the available resources to collect the models as well as the terminology and phraseology required (*i.e.* the raw materials that will be integrated into the translated material).
74. The **translator** forwards those resources to the reviser and/or the work provider for further additions, changes (*e.g.* in-house terms or phrases instead of those suggested by the translator), approval or agreement. The reviser 'approves' suggestions made by the translator; the work provider 'agrees' that the resources are 'OK with him'.

4.5 Doing translation samples

75. Whenever required, and particularly when the translation is the first contract undertaken for the particular work provider, the **translator** submits one or several translation samples to the work provider or reviser for approval.

A translation sample is different from a test. The aim is no longer to check the quality of the translator's work but to agree on various aspects of a translation and how it will actually be carried out. The sample allows the work provider to check that all the options chosen are valid and to get an idea of the end-result.

4.6 Having the resources/raw materials and additional specifications approved

76. The **work provider** or the **reviser** approves the raw materials and resources (terminology, phraseology and templates) that the translator intends to use – meaning, in fact, that the items submitted are considered valid and correct. The work provider or reviser may add any important items that might be missing.

In most cases, the work provider Okays the resources – which means he *'passes them fit for use in that particular translation'*.

77. The translator receives the resources and sets them up ready for use in the translation, either in the form of tables and repertoires that are made available to the translator and other operators, or by integrating them into the source material (either into the version for translation or a support version, as the case may be).
78. The **translator** receives any additional specifications the work provider stipulates and takes all necessary action as a consequence.

4.7 Advance (or forward) operations

79. The **translator** carries out all the advance operations and submits the result to the work provider and/or the reviser for approval.

Advance operations are all translating and processing done ahead of the time they would normally be undertaken if the various components were processed in sequence as they appear in the source material. For instance, software application menus and dialogue boxes are generally translated right away because their translations will be used in all of the corresponding documentation. Any part of the source material which will be used as benchmark material during the translation will also have to be processed ahead of the rest of the material to be translated.

Any primary material (which is part of a wider whole or from which other material is derived) is translated in advance too. This applies, for instance, to any segment reused from a previous version of the source material.

80. The **work provider** and the **reviser** approve the relevant results and send them back to the translator.
81. The **translator** receives the approved result and integrates or re-integrates the items concerned into the material for translation or into the secondary material.
82. The **translator** updates the support version and/or version for translation.
(**Note:** the support version is essential whenever several translations are done in parallel, or in the case of dictated translation, where it enables the translator to sustain sufficient speed because most vital elements and directions are already in place).
83. If relevant, the **translator** sets up the validated raw materials and resources in the translation environment.
Transfer can then take place in optimum conditions.

5. Transferring/translating

84. The **translator** translates. In most countries, the freelancer has to work with all due diligence whereas the translation company has an obligation to produce results.
85. During the transfer stage, the **work provider** and the **reviser** acting on behalf of the work provider supply any information which the translator may need (providing they can supply this at first hand) and continue to provide the reasonable level of support that the translator can expect.

The following would normally apply:

In cases of *force majeure* (illness, fire, etc.) or failure of the work provider to comply with the terms and conditions of the contract, notwithstanding any provision to the contrary, the translator is entitled to terminate the contract without having to pay any damages.

Should the work provider significantly modify the original demand, the terms of payment and the deadline must be renegotiated.

Should the work provider cancel the order for any reason, the work already completed must be handed over to the work provider, who must pay the translator on the basis of the work completed, plus additional costs, including:

- preparation costs for the whole translation, AND
- compensation, if the translator has scheduled his workload so as to work solely and exclusively on the job thus cancelled or interrupted and cannot reasonably expect to find other work for the same period.

The translator must notify the work provider of any delays in delivery. Should the delay be unjustified, the work provider is entitled to terminate the contract unilaterally and without compensation.

The translator may not sub-contract all or any part of the work without the work provider's explicit agreement.

6. Performing quality controls and upgrades

Quality controls are, first of all, those carried out by the translator himself, then those carried out by the reviser, the work provider, or other operators.

6.1 Quality controls by the translator

86. The **translator** must carry out five basic checks and controls:

- a) *Material quality checks, i.e.* checking that everything that had to be translated has in fact been translated, and that the translation complies with all applicable specifications and with all the options retained for such as figures, dates, names, formulas, headings, layout, etc.
- b) *Language, style and register quality checks:* checking that anything related to language (spelling, grammar, syntax, terminology, phraseology), style and register is (1) correct, (2) homogeneous and (3) in compliance with all applicable specifications.
- c) *Technical-factual-semantic quality checks:* checking that all the factual information, data, or logical or chronological sequences are adequate and comply with all applicable specifications.
- d) *Transfer quality checks:* checking that all the relevant and significant elements in the source document are present in the translation (with allowance for the necessary adaptations) and that the translation complies with (i) professional standards, (ii) the work provider's specifications and (iii) any specific constraints related to end user needs and requirements.
- e) *Homogeneity and consistency checks (harmonization):* checking that the style, terminology, phraseology and register are perfectly homogeneous. This is particularly essential when dealing with batch translations (material translated by several different translators).

When carried out by the **translator**, such checks amount to *revision*, because the translator also carries out the necessary corrections, changes, amendments and upgrades.

87. If need be, the **translator** removes the translated material from the translation environment and re-assembles it: merges files, re-inserts 'non text' items, graphics, messages or screen captures, reactivates tags, etc.
88. If need be, the **translator** converts or back-converts the translated material, *i.e.* restores it to its original format after translation.
89. If need be, the **translator** carries out a functional quality check to make sure the translated material 'works' correctly once it is re-assembled.
90. If need be, the **translator** 'integrates' the translated material into its support. Integration may imply different processes according to the type of medium being used and the material translated. The processes may include:
 - integrating text and graphics *via* layout applications and desktop publishing packages,
 - integrating translated material into the software,
 - integrating translated text and dialogue into the video game,
 - cueing the subtitles,

and a number of other techniques and processes, depending on the type of material and support.

91. If need be, the **translator** carries out further functional quality tests to make sure that the integration phase has not altered the performance of the translated material and that the reintegrated material is working correctly after translation.

As the case may be, the translator delivers:

- a 'deliverable' or 'ready for dissemination' translation to the work provider or to her/his authorized agent, or
- a 'ready to revise' translation to the reviser.

92. If the translation is to be delivered to a reviser, the **translator** prepares the revision kit for the latter.

The revision kit includes:

- the material to be translated, the translation job specifications, the resources and raw materials (terminology, etc.),
 - any items from the translation kit likely to be required by, or useful for, the reviser,
 - the translated material and the specifications for the revision,
 - (if need be) the equipment and software required to carry out the revision.
93. The **reviser** sets up and tests the revision environment.
 94. The **translator** forwards the revision kit along with a delivery note, to the reviser (or work provider).

The translator is deemed to have carried out all necessary translation quality controls. Should the translation not be up to the 'revisable quality' standard or not comply with the job specifications, the work provider – or the reviser himself – may require the translator to make the necessary corrections or alterations. If the translation is sub-standard, the work provider may pass on the work to another translator (or reviser) and question any payments to the first translator.

6.2 Quality controls by the reviser

NOTE

The reviser may be the work provider himself.

95. The **reviser** receives the revision kit, including the translated material deemed to be of 'revisable' quality.
96. If need be, and unless the translator has already done so, the **reviser** reassembles and processes the material to be revised (*i.e.* carries out antivirus checks, installs the material on the required medium, compiles it, back-converts it, reformats it, etc.)
97. If need be, the **reviser** sets up the material to be revised in the relevant environment.
98. The **reviser** carries out all standard quality controls, with the exception of material checking, which is fully under the translator's sole responsibility. This means making sure that all material checks and language quality controls have been carried out, and that the translation is homogeneous. If the translation is defective in any of these respects, the reviser will ask the translator to upgrade the translation to 'revisable quality' standard.

The reviser will then check the quality of the translation as regards:

- style and 'flow',
- transfer processes (the crucial test),
- factual information and meaning.

The **reviser** corrects, alters, adds, modifies, completes, restructures, rewrites or reorganizes any faulty, deficient or inadequate sentences, segments or sections to bring the material up to the required quality standard (generally: 'ready for print' or 'zero defect', but in some cases, simply 'fit for delivery').

99. The **reviser** carries out a thorough functional check of the translated material. The translated material must be 'fully operational' and carry out all the required functions.

100. The **reviser** fills in a quality control record slip, indicating any deficiencies, mistakes or omissions that have been noted and corrected.
101. If need be, the **reviser** or the **work provider** reprocesses the revised material (*i.e.* by checking for viruses, setting up the material on the appropriate medium, compiling, back converting, reformatting it, and performing any other kind of treatment which may be required).
102. The **reviser** gets the revised translation ready for delivery to the work provider.
103. The **reviser** forwards the translation to the work provider in what is now of 'deliverable quality' and even 'fit for broadcast' grade if it meets the work provider's standards.
104. The **reviser** writes out the quality control record and forwards it to both the translator and the work provider.

6.3 Quality controls by the work provider

NOTE

The following operations come on top of those carried out by the reviser and are part of the work provider's quality control process if the latter is involved in the revision stage.

105. The translated material (of 'deliverable-quality' grade) is delivered to the **work provider**.
106. If need be, the **work provider** reassembles all the separate parts of the translated material (in particular when the translation has been done in batches).
107. The **work provider** checks the quality of the translation. He may either carry out any corrections which may prove to be necessary or ask the reviser (or translator) to carry out those corrections.
108. The **work provider** carries out any adaptations which might be required, or asks the translator or the reviser to do so.

Such adaptations may be:

- updates required because the source material has undergone changes since the original translation was requested,
- cultural adaptations,
- functional adaptations required because the purpose or mode of communication has changed in translation,
- adaptations required so that the material complies with the requirements and medium for dissemination.

109. The **work provider** creates or updates the quality control slip, which records all the corrections and adaptations which have been carried out or requested.

110. The **work provider**:

- accepts the translation

or

- forwards the translation to the reviser or the translator for further corrections or amendments.

111. If the **work provider** accepts the translation, he will then finalize it. This means integrating any required ‘administrative’ stuff (foreword, guarantee slip, safety warnings, after-sales service conditions, phone numbers, etc.) as well as any identifiers that had been removed prior to translation. It also means doing any final updates and checking that the translated material is fully compliant with any applicable specifications.

Finalization may also involve the reintegration of such parts of the material that neither the translator nor anyone else is supposed to know about. This does not take place at this juncture unless the translated material has fully completed its lifecycle before being passed on to its end-users.

112. If need be, the **work provider** reprocesses the translated material, sets it on the delivery medium and carries out all the standard checks before sending it to the translator.

6.4 Corrections and adaptations by the translator and/or reviser

113. The **translator** (and the **reviser**) receive the translation and review the quality control record.

114. If need be, the **translator** prepares a version for correction and/or adaptation (by disassembling the material, installing it back in the revision environment, freezing the tags, etc.).

115. The **translator** carries out the corrections and/or adaptations required.

As long as the **translator** has not carried out all the requested adaptations **that he can safely make**, the **reviser** will not intervene.

116. If functional adaptations have been requested and if the contract specifies that they are to be carried out by the reviser, the translator forwards the corrected material to the reviser.

117. If functional adaptations have been requested, the **reviser** carries out those adaptations – simply because functional adaptations generally require more advanced know-how and competences.

All the necessary adaptations are carried out by the reviser whenever this is specified in the brief/functional specifications or requested specifically by the work provider.

Note: Some adaptations, such as reorganizing material translated in batches by several translators or companies, or ensuring compliance with legal conditions, etc. can generally only be carried out by the work provider.

118. If the **reviser** has not carried out all the adaptations requested by the work provider, he returns the translation to the translator for the latter to take all necessary action.
119. If the **reviser** has carried out all the requested or necessary adaptations, he goes through all the standard checks and controls and delivers the translation to the work provider.
120. The **translator** carries out the necessary adaptations so that the translation can be passed as 'X-ready' – where X is anything from 'print' or 'camera' to 'Web'.
121. The **translator** carries out a final functional check on the translated material, to make sure that it is fully 'operational'.
122. If required, the **translator** reassembles all the translated material, which is now 'X-ready' as above.
123. If required, the **translator** reintroduces or 'embeds' the translated material into the original 'product' and carries out a new functional check on the assembled product.
124. The **translator** prepares the translated material (and, as the case may be, the product in which it is embedded) for delivery to the work provider.
125. The **translator** delivers the 'X-ready' material to the work provider, along with an updated delivery note.

6.5 Final checks

126. The work provider receives the 'X-ready' translation.
127. If required, the work provider reassembles all the revised material, particularly if the revision has been carried out in separate batches.
128. The **work provider** carries out one last check on the translation and implements any corrections which may be required before asking the translator and/or the reviser to carry out any necessary final checks.
129. The **reviser** (or the **work provider**) qualifies the translation and carries out any required or requested corrections or adaptations.

The aim of the 'qualification' test is to make sure that the translation 'fits the bill' in every respect (both functionally and ergonomically) as a working 'product'. Qualification covers all types of translated material but mostly anything 'instrumental', *i.e.* anything that actually serves a definite purpose: user guides, text on machines or products, menus, and items that are components of other products such as subtitles, sound tracks, online helps. In the case of software applications and software components, Web

sites, video games, and anything ‘on-line’, qualification is known as ‘on-line QA’.

‘Qualification’ can either be ‘virtual’ or ‘*in situ*’.

- ‘Virtual’ qualification means using the translation in simulation ‘*in the end-user’s shoes*’. This should be done by someone as similar or as close as possible to the real end-user.
- ‘*In situ*’ qualification is a real-life test of the translation’s effectiveness (for instance: using a machine or a product with the sole help of the translated user guide).

Qualification is of course mandatory in the case of software localisation or the translation of multimedia material. This requires the translated material to be reintegrated into the software application or into the product it originated from – a process which itself calls for prior functional checks.

130. The **work provider** creates or updates the quality control sheet.
131. If required, the **reviser** or the **work provider** re-processes the revised material (by checking it for viruses, setting it up on the appropriate medium and by carrying out any other operation that might be required or appropriate).
132. The **work provider** either:
 - accepts the translation without reservations
 - or
 - asks the reviser and/or the translator to carry out yet further checks and corrections.
133. If further checks and corrections are requested, the **work provider** prepares the translation and returns it once again to the translator and/or the reviser, along with the quality control sheet.
134. The **translator** and the **reviser** receive the quality control sheet and take note of the reservations and/or requests made.
135. The **translator** or the **reviser** carries out the final corrections and checks. The translation is now deemed to be of ‘zero-defect’ quality.
136. The **translator** or the **reviser**, or **both**, certify the translation and sign:
 - The ‘ready for delivery’ note,
 - The authorization to ‘print’, ‘burn’, ‘compile’, or ‘put online’ the translated material.
137. The **translator** or the **reviser** gets the translation ready for delivery by reprocessing the material, carrying out the necessary checks and controls and reinstalling the material on its delivery medium.

138. After the translated material has been processed, the **translator** or the **reviser** makes the **final delivery** and forwards the delivery note and the authorization to print, burn, compile, etc.
139. The **work provider** takes delivery of the translation.
140. The **work provider** signs the delivery note for the translation and passes the translation as 'fit for dissemination'.
141. As the case may be, the **translator** or the **work provider** installs the translated material on the destination support medium (by cloning the Web site, burning the sub-titles, burning a CD-Rom or creating a DVD, preparing the material for print, or carrying out any other operation which may be required).

7. Closing the job file

142. The **work provider**, the **translator** and the **reviser** each carry out a post-mortem analysis of the translation process: *i.e.* a comprehensive job review sometimes called a post-project review aiming to determine the strong points and the weaknesses in the process, for future reference and improvement.
143. The **work provider**, the **translator** and the **reviser** share the results of their job review, pinpointing particular areas where there is room for improvement and suggesting ways of achieving this.
144. The **translator** sends her/his invoice and the **reviser** does likewise.
145. The **work provider** receives the invoice or invoices.

Any disagreement over invoice totals or payment of sums due is resolved according to the initial terms of the agreement or according to the arbitration clause included in the contract between the work provider and the translator. In any case, the translator's financial liability is limited to the invoice total.

146. The **work provider** pays all sums due on the basis of the invoice(s) received.
147. The **translator** and the **reviser** receive payment of sums due.
148. The **work provider**, the **translator** and the **reviser** close the corresponding job files.

8. Creating the archive/updating the instruments

149. The **work provider**, the **translator** and the **reviser** each make an archive of everything pertaining to the completed job.

150. The **work provider** and the **translator** ‘consolidate’ all the resources used for the job (templates and models, terminology, phraseology, translation options, aligned versions, translation memories, and so on).

Consolidation consists in sorting, cleaning, completing, formatting and preparing the terminology, phraseology, models, templates, translation memories, and any other resources in view of future use.

151. As the case may be, the **translator** will integrate all the consolidated material into the appropriate system (translation memory management system, terminology management system, etc.) for future use.

If this has been specifically set out in the specifications, the translator prints out or burns a CD/DVD version of the glossary that was built up for the translation.

152. Finally, **each partner** updates the translation management tools and also the databases of subcontracting operators or participants (updated by the work provider) or the database of work providers or clients (updated by the translator and/or the reviser).

All in all, **each partner** creates a project memory that will be reactivated as needed in the future.

9. Follow-up

153. The **work provider** is naturally responsible for the end-use of the product resulting from the translation. This will therefore imply:

- disseminating the product or having it disseminated, *i.e.*:
 - having the product photocopied, or printed, or integrated into a Web site, or compiled, etc.
 - having the material and product disseminated on the relevant medium (paper document, CD-Rom, video, etc.),
 - having the translated material delivered to or disseminated among the relevant end-users.
- ensuring the appropriate follow-up for the translated material (*via* user surveys, forums, user-groups, FAQs, etc.).

154. It is now by no means rare for the **translator** (or, more likely, the translation company) to be expected to disseminate and follow-up the translation. In fact, the service provided by the translator now frequently covers all the stages in the process, up to and including final dissemination of the translation.

In this case, the job file will only be closed for good once final dissemination has been completed.

155. The **work provider**, the **translator**, and the **reviser** may each be called upon to follow-up the translated and disseminated material as regards the work they have carried out (or according to contractual specifications).
156. Each of the partners in the process will follow up their business contacts:
- The **translator** and **reviser** keep in contact with their client (the work provider).
 - The **work provider** keeps in contact with his contractors (the translator and the reviser).

SECTION II

The translating profession

The translating profession

All translators have excellent language skills, excellent writing skills, and an interest in anything technical. All of them are also, perforce inquisitive, patient, methodical and thorough, at the cutting edge of IT, good at networking (with clients, colleagues, domain specialists, etc.) and, if possible, well versed in one or more specialist fields.

1. Translators

A few figures

The Van Dijk report of 1997 estimated the total number of translators and interpreters in the EU to be 82,000 in the commercial market, *i.e.* 380 per million inhabitants, plus 20 to 25% equivalent full-time jobs in official government, international and NGO translation and interpreting services. There were also 17,700 captive jobs in translation.

An Allied Business Intelligence, Inc. report estimated there were 142,580 full-time translators in the world (43,222 in Europe) and 261,180 part-time translators (79,488 in Europe) in 1999.

Lionbridge Technologies, the world's largest language service provider has 4,000 employees worldwide.

The EUATC (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies) so-called 'Boucau' report of 2005 states that: In 2005, we can (...) estimate that there are around 250,000 people working in the global translation industry, including 110,000 in Europe. Some sources estimate there are 300,000 translators worldwide.

Annual turnover in the translation employment market is around 2% including those who drop out of the profession altogether.

Anyone looking for up-to-date figures on the populations of translators can find the information on the Web (query: "*number of translators*") with the difficulty that over half the answers concern *translators* as communication devices in networks. Also of interest in that respect are:

- www.lisa.org
- [www.euatc.org](http://www.euatc.org/conferences/pdfs/boucau.pdf) (especially <http://www.euatc.org/conferences/pdfs/boucau.pdf>)

- www.common senseadvisory.com
- www.wordbank.com

and, of course, the sites of national unions of translators whose addresses are available from www.fit-ift.org/en/news-en.php (members)

1.1 Translators are not interpreters

Translators always translate *written* material or code or transcribed pre-recorded speech. This usually implies a time-lag between the moment the material is produced and the time when it is translated – notable exceptions being documents or content that are produced bilingually or multilingually straightaway and in parallel. Translation essentially has to do with written (or graphic) material. Yet, some written translations are designed to be spoken (*e.g.* theatrical performance, dubbing, voice over) and more and more translations are dictated for increased productivity. These may be dictated into a voice recognition system or recorded for later typing by professional typists. And getting a recorded rough translation that can be listened to in a car while sitting in a traffic jam or on the train may, in some cases, turn out to be the most economically sensible solution and a very efficient alternative to machine translation.

1.2 Translators are mostly women

The translating profession has long been dominated by women. The reasons were economic (the relatively low rates were acceptable as a second income) and social (translation offered part-time opportunities and flexibility). This is still to a large extent true today, though the male element is increasingly attracted to the profession, as a result of:

- the increasingly technical-complex nature of the source materials available,
- the widespread development of IT translation tools,
- the tendency for translation to be seen as a possible answer to unemployment or skills obsolescence,
- the diversity of the translation-industry ‘jobs’ and of the skills required.

The relatively high-tech status of specialised technical translation and of localisation has encouraged more men to enter the profession, as has the rapid computerisation of the translator’s working environment. At the same time, the uncertainties of many high-tech employment markets and the accelerating obsolescence of technical skills have also prompted a number of engineers to turn to sectors of the job market which still appear to offer opportunities while not requiring a disproportionate amount of investment, either financially or in terms of training.

Many technicians affected by ruthless downsizing and cost-cutting are particularly attracted by the prospect of being their own boss for once. Given that most have some linguistic competence, translation may at first sight seem to be the golden opportunity. Finally, salaried employment in the translation industry tends to focus more and more on such activities as project management and language engineering, which seem to some men more challenging than run-of-the-mill 'translation'. The growth of the localisation segment of the industry – with its demands for technical abilities and skills – has had much the same effect.

1.3 Translators work in language pairs

The most important thing about translators is the combination of working languages that they can offer and the direction of translating. An 'English-French translator', for instance, is someone who translates from English into French.

The translator's mother tongue/native language is known as his 'A' language (the language into which he can translate without hesitation and limitation). His first foreign language is known as his 'B' language, and his second foreign language as 'C'. B is said to be an 'active foreign language' since it is a language the translator can read and understand almost like a native, and C is said to be a 'passive foreign language' since the translator can read and understand like a native speaker but not speak so well. Some translators have two 'B' languages and additional languages are an asset, particularly if they are 'rare' languages with added market value.

As regards the language combinations offering the best employment opportunities, the ideal profile would seem to be any combination of English (no wonder!) with another major language (Chinese, Arabic, German, Spanish, etc.) and with one less widely known language – meaning a language that only few translators offer though it generates significant flows of economic and cultural exchanges and volumes of translations.

It is a well-known fact that payment levels for a given language combination are in reverse proportion to the number of translators working with that combination. Hence the premium commanded, for instance, by those European translators who can work from and into languages used in highly developed or rapidly developing economies such as Japan or China or who can work from and into the languages of the EU new candidate countries.

Translation graduates are expected to be able to translate from **two** foreign languages into their mother tongue, the idea being that graduates cannot assume they will be able to specialise very early in a single language combination and/or in any one particular field. It is in fact the markets that determine what is practical or economically viable for each translator. A young translator may wish to offer several language combinations while still building up business whereas many experienced salaried or freelance translators earn a good living working with a

single language combination – admittedly, these often specialise in one particular highly technical field.

When it comes to increasing market shares, it is worth wondering whether one should add a new language to the existing combination or choose to concentrate on acquiring additional high-tech competence in a field such as IT, telecommunications or finance.

When companies take on translators, English is usually taken for granted at least as the B language. But that does not necessarily imply that the ‘C’ language will be used very often.

In any given country, translators whose mother tongue is other than the country’s main language are usually very much in demand and can command more generous rates than ‘native’ translators. However, they can only hope to maintain that competitive advantage, especially vis-à-vis particularly demanding clients offering major contracts, by making sure they constantly keep abreast of current trends and changes in their native language and culture. Failing this, their ‘premium value’ may evaporate very quickly indeed. No wonder many companies require their expatriate translators to take periodic cultural/linguistic baths in the ‘target’ country ... or quit translating.

1.4 Translators translate from B to A, with (increasing) exceptions

Any code of good practice has it that translators translate into their own language and culture only – or at least into languages where they have mother tongue proficiency. When the strategic or commercial stakes are high, many large international translation companies even take this requirement one step further and consider that a translation must be done by a native speaker specialising in the particular field concerned and actually living and working in the country where the translation will be used.

This is so because the translated message must obviously be totally ‘embedded’ in the target culture and this is only really possible if the translator is native to that culture or has become fully ‘localised’ into it. Furthermore, only someone translating into his mother tongue can really produce the clear, effective and, above all, naturally flowing language that a native speaker can produce. Stylistic fluency and ease are essential even in technical translation. Some might even say: **especially** in technical translation.

However, mostly for economic reasons, translators are increasingly expected to be able to translate from A into B and, if the need arises, from A into C (a common practice in some countries). In this case, the translator is said to have three working languages (one native tongue plus two foreign languages) of which two are “active”

and one is “passive”. He will then have three language combinations: $A \leftrightarrow B$, $A \leftrightarrow C$ and $C \leftrightarrow B$, but will only usually work with the first two (or, market circumstances permitting, only the first). Professional organisations recognise this fact of life by recommending different rates for translations into and out of the native language. Both the client and the translator should naturally be aware of the risks involved in this kind of practice, and should make sure that any ‘important’ or ‘critical’ translation is checked and revised by a native speaker.

1.5 Translators specialise

Every translator specialises sooner or later, not only because no one can pretend to know everything but, more importantly, because it pays to specialise. Any job requiring special skills usually commands higher rates, simply because highly specialised and skilled professionals are few and far between.

However, specialised translation obviously requires a good knowledge of the field or subject domain involved. Knowledge of languages is by no means sufficient and the translator must be familiar with the subject area of the material for translation or, if practical, with the product or process referred to in the document, but also with the thought processes and value systems shared by those who will be reading or using the translation.

1.6 Translators are masters of communications technologies

A good translation also requires the translator to be proficient in all the communication techniques involved. This means mastering a complex set of tools, techniques and media, including word processing, desktop-publishing software, translation memory management systems, search engines, computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, text aligners, Web site design tools, Web editors, and many more. The translator now needs to be familiar with different computer environments and platforms, and should be able to set up, uninstall and use any new software that happens to be required, or adapt it to specific needs and uses. Some areas, such as software, Web site and video games localisation, require a whole range of advanced skills in language engineering, infographics, computing, management, marketing, product design and communication.

As a consequence, a practising translator’s resume will now usually include a significant range of specialisms and special skills with a rather impressive list of IT tools and techniques. There are many reasons to this. First, more and more materials are only available in digital form and, if not, the very first urgent step is to digitize them so that automatic processing is made possible. Second, source materials for translation and completed translations are now almost always forwarded *via* the Internet. Third, office software applications (*e.g.*

spell-checkers, etc.) can help translators carry out a considerable number of often tedious and repetitive tasks. Fourth, translation software can produce significant productivity gains, which are vital when time to market is of the essence. Last, translation is essentially part of the information and communication industry and communication nowadays requires a perfect knowledge of ICT.

2. Translators' statuses

Short of disregarding the law and opting to be an 'outlaw', a translator has to choose between working as an in-house (salaried) translator or as a freelancer. Translators working for publishers come somewhere in between.

2.1 Salaried translators

By definition, the salaried translator is bound to her/his employer. The employer pays both the salary and any mandatory employer's contributions, while the translator pays the relevant employee's contributions.

Salaried translators may be employed by:

- an in-house corporate translation department or an official translation service. If the service is run by a government body (e.g., a Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or an international organisation (the OECD or the European Court of Justice), the translator is a public sector employee;
- a translation company (a Translation Service Provider),
- a temping agency,
- an umbrella company,
- a translation brokerage company.

2.1.1 *In-house translators*

In-house translation departments are fully-fledged services within companies or various kinds of governmental or non-governmental organisations. Major groups or organisations with full-blown translation departments include Ericsson, Michelin, Spar, Carrefour, Sears, Eurocontrol, UBS, Air France, MacDonald's, Snecma, EADS, Boeing, PCW, all international banks, etc.

Although many translators would prefer to see translation departments recognised as part of the production-oriented and 'technical' side of the business, they are more often than not associated with the 'documentation' side or, in a few rare cases, with the marketing department. The translation department or service deals with most company translation needs and farms out any extra workload.

In most cases, in-house translation departments owe their existence to the powers of persuasion of some documentation manager or bilingual secretary-cum-translator or to an in-house translator who succeeded at some point in convincing Management that translation, and particularly high-quality translation, does generate profits and value for the company.

Once a translation service or department has been identified within the company or organisation, awareness of the importance of a clearly set out in-house language policy covering issues such as terminology, phraseology, parts lists and bills of materials, concept definitions, technical writing and technical documentation increases.

The in-house translation and 'language' department then generally expands, taking on wider responsibilities and acquiring new technical resources which help to improve its standing as a 'technical' department within the company.

The expanding translation department (which has generally already taken on responsibility for areas such as technical writing and terminology management) then turns into a full-blown communication service, whose ambit will cover not only translation, but also documentation design and publication (desktop publishing) and Web page and Web site design. It then runs the risk of exploding, which leads to more and more outsourcing until, like any organisation, it decides to concentrate on its 'core' skills of translation and technical writing. More often than not, a new service is created to take care of Web mastering and localisation.

Salaried translators working for in-house translation departments work solely for their employer (a company, a government department, an international organisation, etc.), and work on their employer's premises unless both themselves and their employer find it more convenient to have them work from home.

As long as the translator's role is clearly defined and everyone understands that good translation requires whoever requests translations to actually get involved, the in-house translator can be more efficient than external translators. The in-house translator has all the information required on hand. He also has direct access to the relevant sources, *i.e.* the product or process concerned, the authors of the material being translated, existing in-house documentation, authoritative validation and technical revision facilities, etc.

The ideal situation is when clear contractual rules specify the way all the partners within the company (prominently the in-house 'clients') should work together to try and achieve maximum translation quality. Efficiency and quality can be improved even further if the company has a General Manager in Charge of Translation to interface with the translation requesters within the company on the one hand and the in-house translators on the other. The translation manager thus helps draw up specifications and briefs, negotiates deadlines and defines and prioritizes work schedules. An increasing awareness of translation and documentation quality constraints usually helps to enhance the status (and

performance) of the in-company translation department. Ultimately, this should lead to the specification of the respective rights and duties of the translation requesters and providers but also to the implementation of codes of good practice, style guides, and any number of guidelines.

Unfortunately, the engineers and technical staff all too often tend to view in-house translators as ‘language and literature bods’ with little knowledge of what ‘real’ work involves. In such a context, in-house translators have to fight hard to gain recognition as professionals in their own right, who are involved in a highly technical and complex job, and who can only be expected to deliver quality if (a) they are given sufficient notice and time in which to complete the job, and if (b) those who need the translation are willing to provide all the information required and requested by the translators and, at least, to guarantee the quality of the source material.

The in-house translator’s in-company ‘clients’ may be just as awkward as the freelancer’s clients on the open translation market, if not more so, as the former may consider that “*the translators should just get on with it: after all, that’s what they’re getting paid for and for heaven’s sake, it’s not that difficult a job...*”.

The major institutional translation services which are part of well-known governmental or international organisations (e.g. government departments, the Canadian Government’s “Translation Bureau”, the European Union’s Directorate General for Translation, NATO, the UN or UNESCO, etc.) are generally well known. Translators working for such services are usually the envy of the profession due to their rather (very) favourable terms of employment and working conditions.

A special case: decentralised in-house translation services

When a company or organisation has to cope with a high volume of translation needs, it may find it more efficient to split the translation work between a number of different in-house departments or services – which may also be the case when a government translation service has offshoots in each ministry for example. Each separate service will then be expected to specialise in the domains or types of materials particular to their sector of government or to their division within the company.

Official translation services generally share a number of common features:

- They have usually been set up in response to particular social, cultural and political contexts: national bilingualism or multilingualism as in Canada or Switzerland or institutional multilingualism as at the U.N. or UNESCO.
- Institutional translators generally specialise in a fairly narrow field (often dictated by the special remit of the institution or division in which they work).

- The service usually has to sub-contract varying quantities of work to external translators, simply because in-house staff alone is not sufficient to cope with demand.
- Just as any other manager, the manager of a translation service may be tempted to outsource **most** translations on the grounds that it will be cheaper and quicker to have them done on the free market – except, naturally enough, for confidential or classified documents. Then, once they have gone down that road, they start thinking, rightly or wrongly, that in-house processing might actually be more cost-effective after all ...
- Institutional translation services usually find the going easy when the economy is thriving and politicians and public opinion do not consider the translation service as a ‘luxury’. Things don’t look so bright when cost-effectiveness and ‘profitability’ (meaning cost-cutting) become the order of the day.
- Institutional translation services usually apply stringent recruitment criteria (a minimum of five years professional experience in most cases, and the ability to get through in an impressive series of gruelling recruitment tests).

2.1.2 ‘Temping’

To all intents and purposes, translators hired by ‘temping’ agencies work as freelancers, except that they are salaried employees and do not have to look for contracts themselves.

2.1.3 *Translation company translators*

Translators working for a translation company are fortunate in the sense that they work in a business that is wholly centred on translation and where the company itself will be responsible for:

- getting the translation contracts,
- negotiating the contracts with the clients and work providers,
- acquiring and maintaining all the ‘tools of the trade’ needed by the translator (*i.e.* documents, equipment, software, means of communication, terminology and phraseology resources, etc.),
- paying the translator’s salary, and
- offering all the statutory entitlements (paid holidays, pension schemes, etc.).

In return, the salaried translators have a duty to make sure that their work will enable the company to operate profitably and pay their salaries. In-house translators must therefore:

- be sufficiently productive to provide a return to investors, pay the various operators’ and the management’s salaries and cover all the company’s expenses, including the cost of marketing, accounting, advertising and overheads,

- guarantee 100% quality (within the specifications agreed with the work provider),
- uphold the company's values and ethical code at all times.

2.1.4 *Agency staff*

Salaried translators employed by a broker or agency are generally paid to manage freelance sub-contractors and proof-read their translations. Their role is to manage each translation project by interfacing with the freelance translators and the clients respectively. This is similar to the role of a salaried translator working for an in-house translation service and who happens to be responsible for outsourcing part of the workload to freelance translators.

By definition, translators working for brokerage companies (*i.e.* carrying out translation contracts brokered by the company or agency) are freelance or independent contractors.

The difference between a broker and an agency is that the broker simply buys and sells translation whereas the agency usually takes care of at least part of the translation process. In most cases, in effect, the agency will prepare the material for translation, provide at least part of the terminology, get information from the work provider and pass it on to the translators, take responsibility for quality control and perform any task having to do with disassembly and reassembly of the translated material and its supporting medium. The broker does none of that.

2.1.5 *Translators under the umbrella company system*

Translators working for an umbrella company are in an unusual legal position. They are basically freelancers but with the status of salaried translators.

Having won a contract for one of their **own** clients, they sign a short-term 'consultancy' contract with an umbrella company for the duration of the job.

The umbrella company then invoices the translator's client for the total amount including tax. It pays the VAT to the tax authorities, takes out its own overheads and commission, reimburses any relevant expenses and pays the employer's contributions. What remains is paid to the translator, who pays the employee's contributions.

The whole point of the exercise is to shift the burden of statutory employer contributions away from the translator. In the more sophisticated schemes, the umbrella company system involves companies based in countries where the contributions and tax burden is considerably light(er). The drawback of this type of scheme is that the translator can become suspect in the eyes of the local tax, health insurance and social security authorities.

Under the umbrella company system, which can take on many different guises, the translators have a hybrid status. They are both freelancers since they set their own rates, find the translation contracts and remain in direct contact with the

clients, and salaried employees of a company (*i.e.* the umbrella company), which will take care of all the administrative and legal paperwork on behalf of the translators (and pay for it out of the translators' pocket of course). In the more sophisticated set ups, the translators are part of a team and a fraction of their salary is based, as a bonus, on the overall income generated by all team members. The company may also provide various services such as training (notably training on how to use the various CAT tools), commercial backing (as in a franchise system) and bulk purchase prices for equipment and consumables. Some may also offer various bonuses and incentive payments to attract more members.

Under such schemes, a translator who has accumulated a sufficient number of 'contract days' with the umbrella company will also be entitled to paid holidays, unemployment benefits and other forms of compensation, just like any other employee.

In this case, the translator is, to all intents and purposes, an employee, covered by health insurance and social security, with paid leave, pension rights, unemployment benefit, statutory access to life-long learning courses, free consumables and bonus payments. But she/he can also choose when and how to work and carry on managing her/his client portfolio, with the commercial backing of the umbrella company.

2.1.6 *Special cases*

Salaried translators do not necessarily translate on their employer's premises all the time. They may also work as 'on-site' translators, or as translation project managers for outsourced translations or as 'remote' or 'seconded' translators.

The '**on-site**' translator actually works on the work provider's premises, particularly in cases where:

- the source material is not available outside the client's premises – for security reasons or otherwise,
- the translator is expected to be in constant touch with the authors or developers of the source material,
- each translation lot has to be assessed and edited in real time because it will be used right away in other parts of the documentation,
- any part of the translation is likely to be re-used immediately (as in on-line help systems) or even integrated into the ongoing development,
- the job has to be carried out using dedicated in-house software or particularly expensive equipment (*e.g.* content management systems) that the translator service provider cannot afford to buy,
- the translation must be carried out on the premises of a work provider and those premises happen to be in a foreign country.

Having a translator on site means the client gets all the benefits of an in-house translator without having any of the responsibilities and additional expense that go with employment.

A **translation outsourcing project manager** may be found either in a translation service or in a translation company. This is someone who manages translation projects by sub-contracting the work entirely to translators from outside the service or company. This involves:

- finding and selecting the relevant external service providers,
- planning the work schedule,
- drawing up the specifications,
- negotiating the purchase conditions,
- ensuring quality control,
- managing the project budget, etc.

If the main contractor is a translation company or an official translation service, the interfacing between work provider and sub-contractors will be done by one or several in-house translators who have a good knowledge of the client company and of its products and services, and who are also familiar with translation processes.

This favours close co-operation between the sub-contracting translators and the work provider who, being familiar with the translators' needs and difficulties will therefore be able to respond quickly and effectively or even anticipate whatever problems they are likely to encounter.

In some cases, the team-leader in charge of managing the translators may not be a translator, but a manager from another area of the business. In this case, the team manager will generally have an engineering background and will expect translators to comply with production and control procedures similar to those found in industry. This is a sign that they both take translation just as seriously as any other kind of industrial process and consider translators to be highly skilled specialists in their own field.

In the 1980s, IBM translation project managers were called translation 'pilots'. Everyone joining the company in the higher ranks of management had to 'pilot' translation projects for a whole year – which was considered as good a way as any other of getting to know the company and its products.

Companies now also more and more frequently outsource translation project management to external translators or translation companies. The latter will not actually carry out the translation themselves, but will manage the project and subcontract the work to other translators. The service that the translator or the translation company provides is not translation; it is translation management. This can be particularly effective since the person interfacing with the work provider and the translators respectively is perfectly aware of all the problems that

may arise and is capable of reacting rapidly to find the appropriate answers if any problem does arise.

In a translation company, the outsourcing manager is a specialist project manager or 'dispatching officer' whose job is to optimise the process by finding exactly the right translator for each contract (*i.e.* a translator whose skills are best suited for the type of work on hand).

2.2 Freelance translators

Freelance translators, or so-called 'independent' translators, are self-employed, meaning they are not in any legal sense 'bound' to their clients or work providers. They either work for 'direct' clients (whom they invoice directly) or for agencies (or brokerage firms) that actually get the contracts and subcontract them to the freelancers.

Freelance translators are expected to pay all mandatory taxes, charges or social security contributions (*i.e.* local taxes, income tax, business taxes, health insurance, state and occupational pension schemes, etc.).

The freelance translators' independent status is legally based on the voluntary contractual relationship they enter into with their clients. This means that both parties agree on the rate that will be charged for the job and on the deadline, and translators are then deemed to be free to carry out the translation in the most appropriate manner, while obviously taking into account their clients' specifications.

Many freelance translators are registered as 'single-person companies'. Many *bona fide* translation companies consider that this amounts to unfair competition in the sense that 'real' companies have to face much higher overheads and costs.

The actual legal framework of freelancing depends on the national legislation applicable. Under French law, for instance, the work provider becomes an employer in the legal sense if he tells the translator how to do the work, monitors the work in progress and reprimands or otherwise penalizes that translator if the work is not carried out to his satisfaction. The practical effect would be for the work provider to have to pay all taxes and contributions that apply for salaried staff.

Given that their income depends on the time spent working, most freelancers work long hours and many would be willing to work longer hours as that would mean the order book is full.

This being so, flexibility and the freedom to decide on how much to work at any given period is considered the major advantage of freelancing. A highly significant number of freelance translators work part time by choice, and this explains why the profession is particularly attractive to women.

2.3 Translators working for publishing companies

In fact, any translator can work for a publishing company and the only reason for setting up a special category is because, in many countries, translations done for publishing companies are subject to specific and special conditions regarding payment and/or tax and contributions. Thus, in a significant number of countries, publishers pay translators a deposit with ensuing royalties depending on the volume of sales and the tax and contributions scheme is similar to that of authors.

Translators working under the “publishing industry” scheme may be literary translators, media translators and even localisers. Whenever applicable, they have in common that they are paid as authors.

2.4 ‘Outlaws’

Any person who practices translation on a commercial basis without paying any of the mandatory contributions or taxes can be considered as an ‘outlaw’. In most countries, a significant percentage of all translations are carried out by unregistered translators who never pay any taxes or contributions on what they earn. Professional translators complain bitterly – and rightly so – about this kind of practice, which allows those who disregard the law to lower their rates and to compete unfairly with those who play by the rules.

Outlaw translators are generally completely impervious to what high-quality professional translation entails and what obligations it implies in terms of tax and contributions. This does not imply, of course, that all those who are guilty of unfair competition are necessarily poor translators. Not paying any of the mandatory dues, taxes and contributions does not mean you are professionally incompetent, any more than dutifully complying with the law makes you a good translator.

All the same, *bona fide* professional translators would naturally like to put an end to these practices, and have been trying to do so over the years through various channels: on an individual basis, *via* their professional organisations and by lobbying the authorities on the issue. They believe that every effort must be made to stamp out unfair competition, especially when, as is often the case, it goes hand in hand with downright incompetence.

It is only if all the market players share the tax and contributions burden equally that all translators can play on a level field. But this is no easy task, for three simple reasons:

1. Too many people consider that having “*done foreign languages at school*” is sufficient qualification for translating – especially if there happens to be available a technical dictionary of the particular subject area on hand.

2. Some work providers are quite happy to turn a blind eye to the fact that the translator is blatantly undercutting going market rates by not paying the relevant taxes and charges on the grounds that “*it’s no skin off my nose is it?*”
3. Unregistered translators include both people whose annual turnover is below the contributions threshold, and those who deliberately avoid paying tax and contributions on what they earn from their translations. Those are more often than not translators with another main source of income.

2.5 ‘Invisible’ translators

In many companies, persons doing translations may be employed under a number of different job descriptions (*e.g.* bilingual secretary, documentation manager, etc.), even when they are qualified translators, simply because the company does not recognise translation as a separate professional skill. This causes immense frustration for those involved because they feel that their qualifications and their work are not recognised for what they are worth (a feeling usually confirmed by their monthly pay slip) and the translations produced are not given the consideration they deserve by the managers who commission the work.

In this kind of business context, translations are also frequently carried out by people with some vague knowledge of languages but lacking any kind of training or qualification in translation. It is a well known fact that, in many companies, translations are done by whoever happens to be free or willing to do the work: the manager’s personal secretary, the trainee from the marketing department who happens to have spent two months abroad, an engineer or technician who is “*perfectly bilingual*”... Translations can thus go unnoticed until the day when the time-bomb of non-quality goes off the day a poor translation returns with a vengeance... having caused loss of business and customer complaints.

2.6 Special cases

A comprehensive overview of translators at work must include those referred to as ‘second-job’, ‘part-time’, ‘occasional’ or ‘remote’ translators.

Second-job translators

The ‘second-job’ translator works in another professional capacity (*e.g.* as a teacher, lecturer, army officer, author, engineer, etc.) as well as working as a translator.

The number of ‘second-job’ translators varies from country to country, and very much depends on national or local tax systems, mandatory contributions and whether one person is allowed to hold two or more jobs at a time. In some

countries, for instance, this *is* possible only as long as the translator is registered with the relevant contributions authorities and is not breaching his employment contract (public servants, for instance, should in theory apply for authorisation to avoid conflicts of interests).

Part-time translators

The part-time translator is someone whose main occupation is translating, but who chooses not to work full-time in that profession. The part-time translator usually is a freelance or salaried translator who has decided to spend more time with wife (or husband) and kids and who incidentally belongs to a household with more than one income – given the average translator's income levels, it is unlikely that a sole breadwinner would willingly opt to work part-time. . . The sad joke has it that quite a few translators do, *albeit* unwillingly, work part-time.

Occasional translators

'Occasional' translators are people who do not rely on translation for a living and who only carry out translation work on an irregular and occasional basis. They cannot therefore be considered, strictly speaking, as professional translators.

Remote translators

'Remote' translators do not make up a category *per se*. They are salaried translators who do not work on their employer's premises. All freelance translators, by definition, are 'remote' translators, unless they happen to be working on a client's premises for the duration of a particular job.

2.7 Distribution

The numbers of translators in each of the above categories are unknown. All we know is how those numbers vary.

The number of freelance translators is growing very fast, for quite obvious reasons:

- becoming a freelance translator is an open proposition in most countries, where no particular legal or administrative restriction applies,
- anyone with some knowledge of languages will readily feel encouraged to set up shop as a freelance translator,
- no heavy investment is needed – more especially as translators can work from home,

- everyone assumes (wrongly) that the Internet is some kind of ‘work providing’ system, that all you need is a (fast) connexion, and that offers will come pouring in. This does work for some people, but not for everyone and not all the time.
- in the face of escalating personnel (and other) costs, many translation companies have given up, thus sending their former employees out on the freelance market. The same also happens with mergers and mergers have been frequent over the past ten years or so.
- there are so many training programmes and graduates all over the place that there is a glut of young translators or would-be translators who cannot find salaried positions and therefore have no alternative but to do it freelance (and cheap too!),
- to get a salaried job, a translator needs expertise and skills way beyond those required for ‘just translating’. This is because the added-value that translation companies and agencies aim at lies in whatever has to be done before and after the translating in the traditional sense of the word and that calls for new ‘value-added’ skills.

At the same time, the number of in-house translators is also on the increase. Except that their profile has changed. In fact, people working in the translation industry are mostly translators by training but not necessarily employed as translators – they work in multilingual multimedia communication engineering. Most of them, of course, translate, but many are expected to do whatever the freelancers do not do (either because they will not, or because they cannot, or because they are not asked to). They do what brings in the added value and money, upstream of, or downstream from the translating/transfer phase. They also act as project managers or as quality controllers and revisers for those jobs that freelancers do carry out and also as developers of new tools and processes or even webmasters or content managers.

So, the number of salaried people in the translation industry is also rising, at about the same rate, but the jobs are for translators with special localisation skills, special subtitling or dubbing skills, special IT skills, special project management skills, special terminology or language engineering skills, special post-editing skills (since, as we said, automatic translation is back mostly for cost-cutting reasons), special quality control and upgrading skills and special financial and accounting or management skills. Not to forget, of course, the commercial staff on whom translation companies depend for their survival.

3. Type of service and work organisation

3.1 'Pure' translation vs. extended service

3.1.1 *Pure translation*

'Pure' translation is when the translator simply deals with the actual transfer from source to target language (and culture). This means the translator just carries out the standard operations required in translating: information searches, data retrieval, terminology searches, translation, and finally proof-reading. Translators actually do 'pure' translation when they work in a team where other operators carry out the upstream and downstream stages of the process (*see below: team work*) and they can concentrate on the 'text translating' part.

3.1.2 *Extended service*

Translators may disassemble Web sites or software packages, write down scripts, detect time-codes, cue the subtitles, align a new translation with existing memories, create dictionaries, 'clone' Web sites after translating their contents, burn a CD-Rom, prepare a translation for printing or for publication, and much more. The service provided is then 'extended' or 'enhanced' and the translator's work organisation will of course be radically different, in particular because it involves using a wider range of tools.

3.2 Single translator vs. multiple translators

A translation may be carried out by one translator working single-handed or by a team of translators.

3.2.1 *Single translator*

In most cases, a translation will be carried out by a single translator, working alone. This does not mean that the translator is the only person concerned: it means the translator is the only person concerned with the **translating** activity including the proofreading.

3.2.2 *Multiple translators*

In some cases, the sheer volume of the translation and/or the tight deadline mean that the work can only be done by a team of translators. There are two possibilities:

- batch translation;
- multiple-pass translation.

Batch translation means splitting up the document or the family of documents in a job contract between several translators. The work may either be carried out in parallel and simultaneously or consecutively.

- **Parallel or simultaneous** translation means the different translators translate their respective batches in the *same time interval*. The main problem is terminological, phraseological and stylistic consistency between the different batches. This can be achieved upstream by making sure the resources or raw materials (terminology, phraseology, models, and memories) are made available to all the translators and validated and harmonised before the translation starts. It can be achieved downstream by harmonising the translations during the proof-reading process. It is essential in any case that all the translators concerned be duly advised that other translators are working on different batches of the same job.
- **Consecutive** translation (in terms of work organisation) means that several translators translate batches of the same job in *successive time intervals*. The ‘batch in progress’ is the one being translated; the ‘upstream batch’ the one prior to the batch in progress and the ‘downstream batch’ is the one that will be translated immediately after the reference batch. Batches may not be translated in the sequence of the original material but harmonisation is easier since a translator can (should) normally have access to all previously translated batches.

Multiple pass translation can be performed on digitized material. A translator translates everything he can translate without risk, error, or uncertainty. His translation is then passed on to a second, more experienced translator, who also translates everything he can translate without risk, error, or uncertainty and amends the initial translation when required – mostly to improve style and readability. The result of this second ‘pass’ is then taken up again by a third, even more experienced translator, who applies the same principles of (a) 100% accuracy and (b) amendment when required. Three successive passes guarantee optimum performance and quality, since the ultimate pass is made by a translator who has all the qualities required to be totally ‘autonomous’. Strange as it may seem, the time taken for the three passes is always lower than the time it would take to achieve the same quality with a single translator except if that translator happens to be the most competent one. In fact, multiple pass translation is conducive to productivity gains in the sense that each translator works within the limits of his or her guaranteed competence. This way, each operator’s competence is brought into play exactly when and where it is needed (*i.e.* where the previous operator, who is presumably less qualified, less efficient and therefore less costly, has left off). Multiple-pass translation thus maximises the cost/benefit ratio and overall efficiency.

3.3 Working alone vs. translating in a team

3.3.1 *Working alone*

The most familiar set up in the translation industry is when the salaried or freelance translator carries out the whole translation process single-handed. This means that the translator receives the material for translation, searches for relevant information on key concepts, processes the terminology, translates, proof-reads, revises, formats the document, delivers the translation, and stores the translated material in the appropriate files and archives. Incidentally, freelance translators will also in the meantime have to look for new contracts, make estimates, negotiate, send out invoices and chase after sums due. . .

3.3.2 *Translating in a team (assisted translation)*

Team work is now gradually becoming the norm in translation companies and is also becoming more widespread among freelance translator networks. It has become quite frequent in effect to hand over the pre- or post-transfer tasks to one or several specialist operators – and agencies have also started setting up teams for the high-volume high-tech jobs, even though in that case the team members may never see each other as they are distributed over the world.

The translator is therefore likely to work more and more frequently in an organisation where various tasks and functions will be allotted to different specialist operators (what opponents call ‘assembly-line translation’). Typically (with all kinds of permutations and combinations) the team will include, for any one job:

- someone in charge of physically preparing the material (scanning, disassembling, separating text from code, securing code, converting code, extracting the terminology, extracting the graphics, etc.). That same person may subsequently re-assemble the material after translation and take care of all the back-ups and archiving, for instance;
- a terminologist-cum-phraseologist (in charge of dealing with all the terminology and language-related problems and, as the case may be, of retrieving and validating any applicable translation alignment or memory),
- a so-called pre-translator (who will input all the available items or resources into the material for translation),
- one or several information suppliers (who will supply the necessary technical or language-specific information),
- a keyboard operator, to type in dictated translations,
- one or several proof-readers and quality controllers and testers in charge of overall quality control,
- someone in charge of readying the material for delivery or publication – who will reassemble the material and format it ready for delivery.

The extent and nature of the tasks carried out by operators prior to and following the transfer phase, *i.e.* before and after the translator actually does the translating, vary according to the work environment and to the human, material, software and financial resources available. However organised, the system always aims to improve productivity and, to a lesser extent, quality – once again because operators come in at maximum capacity and where they perform best. In fact, translator assistance along those lines is generally designed to optimise human resources so that translators need not waste time on painstaking and sometimes fruitless negotiation and research: the productivity gains achieved by freeing the translator from all the pre-translation tasks can be quite considerable. Being a reunion of diverse, but complementary, skills, it may also contribute to opening up new markets for services requiring more than ‘just translating’, particularly in the area of multimedia product translation or localisation. At the same time, it may be put to use to force translators to comply with strict specifications by inserting the required terms, phrases, and segments into the source material prior to translation or to restrict their access to language or information resources – as is the case, for example, with proprietary knowledge bases or terminology bases which, for confidentiality reasons, the translator cannot be allowed to access.

Teamwork is usually organised around a system of ‘pre-processed’ or ‘prepared’ translations.

A **pre-processed** or **prepared** translation is one where the answers to most of the questions the translator might ask are provided along with indications and advice that will help speed up the translating proper. The translator will be provided with:

- notes explaining the main concepts in the document,
- the terminology needed for the translation (either in the shape of a glossary or already inserted in the source material),
- the critical phraseology to be used in the translation,
- the translation memory segments to be used in the translation,
- the name and telephone number or e-mail address of a reference person who will be able to answer any technical questions or terminology queries.

In some cases, the translator will receive a version of the source material already incorporating all the necessary terminology, phraseology, and pre-translated segments. The necessary documentation is fed by some less qualified operator.

‘Pure’ translation is often carried out from a ‘support version’. This is either a digital version incorporating the terminology and anything pre-translated (as above), or a paper version with the pre-translated or pre-processed items added. Support versions also include various markings that indicate what the translator is expected to do and where: *i.e.* cut or remove, adapt, reformat, leave as it is, etc. The use of support versions has become widespread with the development of

translation memory systems as these automatically provide the translator with the pre-translated segments, the terminology, and the phraseological matrices.

In a minor variant of 'pure translation' the experienced translator is deliberately spared all the time-consuming and somewhat complicated ancillary operations such as disassembly, message extraction, screen captures, layout, tagging, code freezing, etc. so that he can concentrate solely on the actual translating of the text parts.

3.3.3 *Working in pairs*

In some sectors of the translation industry (*i.e.* localisation and, to a lesser extent, media translation), translators often work hand in hand with at least one technical expert (often an IT specialist). The productivity gains stemming from this kind of collaborative effort, where each partner uses and builds on the material provided by the other, can be quite considerable. It obviously requires mutual trust and very close cooperation as the quality of the end-product depends on the interaction between the skills and competences of the translator on the one hand and the IT engineer on the other.

3.4 Being 'autonomous' vs. being 'revised'

Autonomy means no revision takes place. This, in turn, means that the translations are not checked, corrected, amended, improved or 'qualified' except, of course, by the translator himself.

3.4.1 *The autonomous translator*

The totally autonomous translator is someone whose translations do not need revising because they are invariably perfect. Most autonomous translators, though, do feel – and say – they do, or would, appreciate it if someone else made a quick check of all their translations. Autonomy is a matter of skill (positively) or cost (when there is no other choice because there is no money for revision).

3.4.2 *The revised translator*

Revision covers the whole range of operations required to achieve optimum quality in a translation which may originally be sub-standard, flawed, or otherwise not up to specifications or 'not compliant'.

A revised translator is one whose work needs to be improved and upgraded (brought up to standard) by a reviser. The reviser is by definition expected to be more competent than the translator, either because he has the technical expertise that the translator lacks, or because of greater experience and/or specific training. The reviser may either be called in by the translator himself, or imposed on the translator by the work provider. In the latter case, the revised translator has to

learn to accept and cooperate with the reviser but translators – more especially the most professional among them – rarely resent having someone else at least proof-read their work.

3.5 PRAT vs. CAT

The PRAT or Pencil and Rubber-Assisted Translator is clearly on the way out, though there are still a few specimens at large. The Computer-Assisted Translator has taken over. Still, that species encompasses a wide variety of sub-species and groups depending on the quantity and complexity (and, of course, performances) of the equipment and software.

4. Partners

The translator's partners include:

- the work provider or her/his representative,
- the contractor's and the work provider's accounting and financial department(s),
- the author or designer of the source material,
- the project manager,
- information providers (including documentation managers),
- the terminologist and phraseologist (or the pre-translator),
- other translators working as part of the same team,
- the proof-reader or reviser or post-translator.

not to mention a host of support staff and technical experts, depending on the context and environment.

The translator may also need to be in contact with the tax and social security officials responsible for collecting the various taxes and contributions that she/he has to pay. The list is ample proof that the translator sitting in an ivory tower now belongs firmly in the past.

The **work provider or contractor** is the translator's main partner, both as regards the commercial aspects of the contract and, more importantly, as regards the quality of the work being undertaken. The work provider can help ensure maximum quality by deciding or accepting to:

- check the quality of the source material,
- make available to the translator any linguistic resource (terminology or phraseology) and technical documentation resources that may be of use in the translation,

- help the translator become familiar with the product(s) or the process(es) described in the source material, if this can help the translator gain a better understanding of the material to be translated,
- clearly specify applicable conditions and constraints,
- provide the translator with the appropriate software tools for the job – if need be,
- answer the translator's queries and provide access to the relevant informers,
- approve the finished translation.

The **author or designer of the source material** can and should provide the translator with all the information required regarding possible anomalies, unclear meaning or ambiguities which the translator may have noted. He is also the natural source of any technical information that might be required.

The **project manager** is the translator's interface with everyone else. He must provide the translator with the necessary job specifications and, if need be, forward to the work provider any queries that the translator may have about the work in hand.

The translator's **informers** are either those that the work provider (or contractor) has designated for the job, or those that the translator has contacted directly. They are vital in ensuring that the translator has access to all the information needed to ensure maximum quality. If the work provider has an in-house documentation service, this will obviously be the translator's first source of information.

The **terminologist cum phraseologist** can also be a vital partner for the translator, by supplying most of the necessary linguistic raw materials (terminology and phraseology and, increasingly, translation memories).

Other **translators** in the same team (or in the same network) are also, strictly speaking, partners, especially when working on the same project. This kind of teamwork obviously requires close co-operation on the part of all concerned, generally based on the principle that the team will put each person's 'fortes' to maximum profit.

Proof-readers or revisers (or post-translators) are essential complements to the translator, in the sense that translators and revisers are jointly responsible for the quality of the end product. The proof-reader will correct all blatant errors or mistakes and signal anything that seems not to meet all the necessary quality requirements. The reviser will actually carry out all necessary corrections and/or adaptations.

The technical experts may act as the translator's *alter ego*. This is particularly the case in companies involved in localisation and/or audiovisual translation (see above). Software localisation and, to a lesser extent, multimedia and audiovisual translation require the combined skills of the 'language expert' and the 'technical

expert', (an IT engineer, a programmer, an infographics specialist, etc.) each carrying out specific, closely related tasks requiring very close co-operation and a high degree of mutual understanding.

5. Job profiles

5.1 Translator

Naturally enough, the basic job profile is that of the translator: someone who carries out all of the tasks that make up the provision of a translation to a client (work provider).

What is relatively new is that translators tend more and more to identify with a group on the basis of specialisation, to the point of setting up their own organisations or associations or, at least, forums. This is the case with financial translators, for instance.

The existing specialisms are still clearly identified professionally. Thus, media translators still are a category apart, including subtitlers/overtitlers – on the one hand – and dubbing authors – on the other hand.

Newcomers to the scene are the localisers, with the three clearly separate sub-groups of:

- software localisers
- Web site localisers
- videogame localisers

5.2 Specialist operators

The various tasks that a freelance translator will normally carry out single-handed can become 'jobs' in their own right in certain professional environments. In services, companies or groups with significant multilingual communication requirements (particularly translation *companies*), this 'division of labour' may come about either because the company is large enough to allow its staff to specialise in certain types of tasks, or because circumstances make it impossible to complete contracts without streamlining the operation (as happens in the case of particularly large contracts or when time to market is of the essence).

Originally designed to enhance quality and/or to increase productivity, this kind of skills specialisation, has led to the emergence of new skills profiles and job definitions in those services and companies that:

- employ large numbers of translators, either as salaried staff, or as freelance sub-contractors,

- often translate by batches (with several translators working on different sections of the same document or on different related documents),
- make extensive use of computer-assisted translation, requiring access to large-scale terminology or phraseology resources and/or prior text processing to ensure that the texts do not include items or segments that the translation software will not be able to recognise and process,
- make extensive use of translation memories,
- use translation engines,
- are bent on optimising and enhancing translator productivity by reducing the effort spent on time-consuming and repetitive tasks,
- design, assemble and update terminology and phraseology resources to be shared by all those working on a same project,
- design and update huge translation memories, notably when these, too, are to be shared by all employees and/or subcontractors,
- insist on specific terminographic and phraseographic practices,
- insist on quality controls and want to make sure that all the relevant skills are available at the very moment they are needed.

Being designed first and foremost to enhance translation quality, the respective jobs of pre-translator, terminologist, phraseologist, editor, reviser, project manager, etc. must be held by people who are, or have themselves been, practising translators. Only translators can alleviate the tensions and conflicts which *reluctant* cooperation between the ‘high-tech newcomers’ and the ‘old-fashioned translators’ might cause. Old hands are likely to resent attempts to ‘assist’ them in their work or to ‘revise’ their production. They will tend to interpret the new set-up as a step towards depriving them of their autonomy and/or taking over part, if not all, of their jobs. As a matter of fact, specialisation is in effect all too easily associated with automation.

The new professional skills profiles (tantamount, in many cases, to job qualifications) are as follows:

5.2.1 Full-time pre-translator

The pre-translator fully processes the material to be translated before the translator actually begins work on the job along the lines set out in Chapter two. All translators do carry out pre-translation tasks, but the full-time pre-translator never goes beyond the pre-translation stage.

5.2.2 Information retriever and documentation manager

The information retriever and documentation manager carries out all the information search and management tasks related to all translations on hand along the lines set out in Chapter two.

When one person is specifically in charge of information retrieval and documentation management in a company or organisation, that person will also carry out general documentation management duties in relation with the company's or organisation's translation domains and customers.

5.2.3 Terminologist

Whenever the specialised function and job of terminologist exists that person will:

- create the translation memories and keep them up to date,
- compile the dictionaries used for the various ongoing translations,
- create and update the terminology resources used in the company or service,
- advise the translators on the best terminology to use, particularly when standard terms, local usage or neology are involved,
- facilitate access to the company's or service's terminology resources,
- update and extend the company's or service's terminology resources,
- answer any queries by translators on questions of terminology, *e.g.* new dictionaries available, terminology standards, language policy decisions, clients' comments, trouble-shooting, etc.

Two further aspects should be underlined: (a) the terminologist is generally also a 'phraseologist' and (b) the task of the terminologist is now recognised as a *bona fide* job within certain companies. There are also a small number of free-lance terminologists who either carry out work on behalf of a number of companies or organisations, compiling and managing their terminology resources (*i.e.* generally the company's or the organisation's in-house dictionary that is made available on CD-Rom or over the intranet), or create dictionaries for publication.

However, it must be stressed that 'pure' terminologists are few and far between. With a few exceptions, terminology-management skills are considered as one of the basic components of the translator's (or the multilingual multimedia engineer's) skills profile and the few practising 'full-time' terminologists are to be found in international organisations or in major translation companies.

5.2.4 Phraseologist

Whenever the specialised job of phraseologist exists, that person will:

- create the translation memories and keep them up to date,
- compile the phraseology used for the various ongoing translations,
- create and update the phraseology resources used in the company or service,
- advise the translators on the best phraseology to use, particularly when standard phrases and local usage are involved,
- facilitate access to the company's or service's phraseological resources,
- update and extend the company's or service's phraseological resources,

- answer any queries by translators on questions of phraseology, *e.g.* new directories available, phraseology standards, language policy decisions, clients' comments, trouble-shooting, etc.

At the present time, phraseologists remain weird and wonderful animals, but will probably come into their own in the near future as clients become more and more demanding when it comes to using the 'right' phraseology.

Incidentally, the phraseologist is the expert in controlled or simplified languages. Such languages are designed so that (1) a given term or phrase can only have one meaning and that a given concept can only have one name or designation and (2) a given phrase can only have one meaning and a given meaning can only be expressed as one phrase.

Both the terminologist and the phraseologist are in the business of 'rationalising' or simplifying language so that ambiguous meaning is reduced or eliminated altogether. 'Rationalised/Controlled French' and 'Simplified English' are two examples of these kinds of controlled language.

5.2.5 *Pure translator*

In a task-based organisation, the translator is the person who converts the material processed by the 'pre-translator' into the (translated) material that the 'post-translator' will proofread and revise. He thus also becomes a specialist operator in the same way as the terminologist.

5.2.6 *Post-translator or post-editor*

The **post-translator** is responsible for checking, proof-reading and revising work carried out by a human translator, while the **post-editor** works on material translated by some sort of machine translation engine. Many different job denominations and job definitions can be found in the profession but the job mainly consists in proofreading and revision (see below).

The tasks carried out by the post-translator and post-editor have now become a job in their own right, mostly because (a) automatic translation is coming back in force and, some would say, with a vengeance and (b) translation quality standards make it compulsory.

Post-translation and post-editing may be distributed even more finely between various operators with corresponding jobs.

5.2.7 *Proof-reader*

The proof-reader's function is the same in the translation industry as in publishing, except that he works on translated material. Proof-readers are juniors who do the material checks and carry out what most often goes by the name of 'linguistic revision' aimed at linguistic correctness.

5.2.8 *Reviser*

The reviser is a highly skilled experienced translator whose job it is to upgrade the translated material to all applicable quality standards and requirements. Both he and the translator are jointly and severally responsible for the ultimate quality of the translation.

In practice, the job denominations of the ‘proof-reader’ and the ‘reviser’ (and even sometimes ‘editor’) are used indifferently to refer to any person involved in the post-translation quality control process. This is unfortunate, as it tends to blur the real differences in the respective levels of skills and experience required. Revisers (who often go by the name of ‘editors’, differ from proof-readers in terms of competence and authority. They are expected to have the skills and experience that the translators do not yet possess and are therefore recruited from the ranks of the most experienced and most competent translators while, as we said, proof-reading is generally a task for beginners.

There are now more and more full-time in-house revisers because of the emphasis on quality: revision can, precisely, provide that extra quality. At the same time, the emphasis put on revision by all translation quality standards is shaping up an environment with more and more professional freelance revisers coming from the ranks of the highly-skilled translators. The provision in the EN15038 European standard that all translations be revised reinforces the need for professional revisers or ‘editors’ of all breeds. It is to be hoped it will also enhance their status . . . and consideration.

To make the picture complete, one must add that there is also room for rewriters. A rewriter literally rewrites a translation either to bring it to required quality levels if it is hopeless or to create a (different) document with a different function and/or for a different audience.

5.2.9 *Online QA operator*

The on-line QA operator, or **tester**, must have all the required linguistic, technical, and cultural skills plus a real fault-finding ability. Translators more and more often do the testing after the translated material has been integrated onto its support medium. This is a quite sensible proposition: they have the required skills to test the various functionalities as anyone else would, and, on top of that, they have the more exclusive competences it takes to assess the quality of the embedded linguistic components. Such testing is called online testing or online QA (*i.e.* online quality assurance).

5.2.10 *Editor/integrator*

In a broad sense, ‘editor’ generally refers to the person who is responsible for page layout, illustrations, formatting, screen captures, message integration, code reassembly and any other task required in order to install the translated document

on the support medium in the required format, ready for delivery or distribution. In fact, the editor-integrator is in charge of all the reassembly work plus the integration of the reassembled material onto to its medium.

5.2.11 *Translator plus*

At a time when there is a clear move towards increased operator specialisation as part the division of tasks within the global process of providing a translation service, a parallel (reverse) move towards dual competence and, one might say, dual jobs, is also becoming apparent.

This means translators combine their translation skills with another type of competence, especially where and when the workload does not justify employing a full-time translator (whether freelance or in-house), or when the job of 'translator' is not recognised as such within the company, or when the particular circumstances of the job so dictate. The translator may thus be translator-cum-information manager, or translator-cum-terminologist, translator-cum-technical writer or translator and interpreter.

The combination of **translation with information management** was (and still is) a way of creating a translation post where the company only recognised documentation research and management skills. Many in-house company translators have previously held jobs in information management or were originally attached to the documentation department.

In this same area, the '**watch translator**' is responsible for collecting and translating information relating to a particular domain or subject which is of particular interest to the client. This job involves the skills of a research librarian and translator (and also, most of the time, of a Web master, since the watch translator is very often called upon to disseminate the information over an intranet or mailing list). The kind of information sought may be strategic, commercial, technological or other. The end-user usually needs to be kept up-to-date with latest developments in the specific field and to be able to use the information immediately. Watch translators will make use of standard search engines and RSS threads, but may also use customised systems for certain types of data watch for specific clients. Machine translation may also be used if the volume of information involved is too large to be processed rapidly by human translation.

The watch translator will generally first of all produce 'indexing' translations in the end-user's language of the documents or Web sites identified as relevant, then write analytical summaries and gradually move towards more and more detailed coverage of the information involved. Only relevant information is actually translated and presented as clearly and concisely as possible.

The **translator-cum-terminologist** is now a fairly standard job profile in the translation industry. Admittedly, each translator 'deals with terminology' or 'has to be able to solve terminological problems' but the dissemination of terminology

management software and the greater emphasis on terminology consistency and standardisation mean that work providers consider the terminology more and more as essential 'raw material' requiring special processing over and above what is required for the translation proper. Similarly, the skills of the terminologist (which include those of the phraseologist) are required when implementing computer-assisted translation or machine translation, which are becoming ever more widespread. All those who have moved in that direction are now creating 'pure' terminologist or phraseologist positions. Basically, the translator-cum-terminologist is in charge of the translation memory management system and of the translation memories.

The **translator-cum-technical writer** is very much sought after. Translators are of course writers by definition, and in many companies where good technical writing is recognised for what it is worth, this is because in-house translators have done a very good job of promoting it. The latter have often turned to technical writing because they were the only people in the company with proper language skills (including native language skills) and also because they were aware of the catastrophic effect of poor writing on product documentation and on foreign language versions of the latter. The natural trend is therefore to 'invite' the translator to turn technical writer, the clinching argument being that translators can write both in their own language and in a foreign language. It is interesting to note that the translator-cum-writer produces much more effective documentation when the bias is towards 'writing' rather than 'translating' as most work-providers see it.

Finally, the **translator-cum-interpreter** translates the spoken as well as the written word. In this combination, interpreting usually tends to be a peripheral activity, simply because of the imbalance between translation and interpreting that prevails in most markets. Besides, the type of interpreting actually practised in this context tends to be considered less 'glamorous' than the simultaneous or conference interpreting by full-time interpreters: most translators-cum-interpreters practise 'liaison' interpreting (in the context of guided tours or other informal situations) or consecutive interpreting. On average, this kind of translator clocks up very few days a year as a conference interpreter.

5.3 Project manager

Project management is a relative newcomer to the translation industry but growing ever so fast. Traditionally, the project manager was the person responsible for a particular contract or assignment in a translation company or service. The name is now used for those who liaise with sub-contracting translators. The project manager supervises the running of a translation project and carries out the following tasks:

- deciding on the workflow,
- taking care of all financial and budget considerations and, more generally, managing human resources, software, hardware, documentation, etc.,
- negotiating with the work provider,
- recruiting translators and other operators,
- drawing up specifications for the job,
- planning the job,
- preparing the source materials for translation,
- supplying the translators with a full ‘translation/localisation/subtitling kit’,
- keeping the translators informed and monitoring their progress,
- checking and controlling translation quality and approving interim and final versions,
- looking after the administrative and financial (cost analysis) side of the project.

Actual tasks and responsibilities do vary according to the work in hand and the work environment and organisation, but those listed above are pretty standard. Below is an example of what a project manager’s responsibilities may amount to:

- Manage the entire life cycle of individual translation projects to achieve highest level of client satisfaction, quality and efficiency
- Provide accurate word count for quotes and final billing information
- Check repetitive text in source documents, if appropriate prepare pre-translated files before sending them to the vendors
- Negotiate the best rates with vendors for each job before starting a new project and develop teams of translators for specific clients
- Communicate clear and specific instructions to the vendors and keep them accountable for quality and punctual delivery
- Obtain the complete specifications on a particular project from the internal/external client including terminology and style preferences
- Co-ordinate/communicate with the clients throughout the duration of the translation projects in a timely manner and update them on the exact status of translation production as required
- In consultation with the Team Leads, plan allocation and outsource all elements of the production (translation, editing and proof-reading) to production resources/vendors/strategic partners
- Utilise the appropriate terminology glossaries, TRADOS or any other available CAT tools when necessary, in conjunction with the Team Lead
- Closely monitor the progress of production at each stage of the process
- Prioritise tasks while handling multiple projects simultaneously
- Ensure highest quality level of translations by applying a strict quality control process for all jobs before delivery to the client

- Regularly update the Team Lead on the exact status of translation production and client communication and inform Team Lead immediately on any problems encountered
- Utilise the job control system to create work instructions, purchase orders, distributions and update the costs and job history for billing purposes
- Ensure that time and costs on each project are managed effectively and costs are monitored closely according to the estimate and negotiate accordingly with the various production resources
- Ensure that the client is satisfied with the service and costs throughout the project
- Provide feedback to Team Lead regarding the performance of the production resources used on specific projects
- Update regularly the vendor information in the database
- Support the Team Lead *ad hoc* on other tasks as required

The number of project manager jobs in the translation industry has increased sharply over the past years and is still growing. This is due both to the increase in subcontracting (subcontracted projects require management and quality control) and to the sheer size and technicality of the average project expressed in terms of number of pages, number of languages, and number and complexity of tools and procedures.

Note: technically, there should be a distinction between the ‘job manager’ – who is in charge of things on the work provider’s side – and the project manager – who is charge of things on the translators’ side.

5.4 Technical writer

The multilingual technical writer shares with the translator a number of closely related skills (documentation techniques, terminology searches, phraseology management, ICT skills, etc.) To many people, multilingual technical writing belongs at least in part to the translation industry if only because quite a few trained translators turn to technical writing, and the skills required are often taught, at least as a specialist option in several translator training institutions.

Many translators more or less gradually slip into technical writing, more especially when this actually means going into multilingual content management (and, more often than not, associated webmastering). After all, they are the people who can write and know how content should be selected, organised, and formulated for maximum efficiency.

5.5 Multilingual, multimedia communication engineer

It should by now be clear that job definitions in the field of translating are essentially characterised by what translators actually do. The whole translation 'profession' is moving more and more rapidly towards a redefinition of what a 'translator' is. The 'new' translator must in fact be ready to undertake as many of the tasks listed and described above as he can, thus becoming an information management expert, technician, terminologist, phraseologist, translator, adapter, proof-reader, reviser, quality control expert, post-editor, editor, graphic design expert and Web page designer, technical writer, Web site designer, Web page integrator, file manager, macro command writer and in some cases, IT specialist, all rolled into one. . . . If you add the skills of the video technician, in certain cases, and those of the subtitler, overtitler, localiser, linguist with a smattering of sociology and ethnology (because good communication requires a knowledge of the cultural background of the target group) plus the ability to plan and manage projects, to carry out quality control, general management skills, and, last but not least, the ability to use a wide range of software, then this 'good all-rounder' is ready for the new multilingual, multimedia communication markets. What is more, these markets require specialist skills in a number of domains and translation tool or source material types. These different combinations of skills and competences, which can command varying levels of remuneration according to distribution and demand, now make up the profile of what is becoming known as multilingual multimedia communication engineering. It is increasingly obvious that the translation-localisation process calls for all of those skills. What remains for every translator to decide is where he or she stands in that respect. That means either the translator decides what share of the workload he can take on and finds out what share of the cake he can get, or he decides what share of the cake he or she **wants** and what cost will have to be paid in terms of investment, training or retraining.

6. The organisation of supply

6.1 The freelancers' offer

Freelancers operate at two levels in the market: as front line operators, in direct contact with their clients, on the one hand, and as sub-contractors (or 'partners') for translation companies or agencies or brokers, on the other.

Prospecting for clients requires a lot of time and energy when translators, particularly those new to the profession, have little of either to spare. The freelancer therefore naturally tends to start out by carrying out work commissioned by trans-

lation companies or agencies – whose numbers have increased considerably over the past ten to fifteen years.

Given that the company or agency or broker rakes off a commission on any contract they farm out, the freelancer's financial reward for the job will obviously be reduced by the same amount: no wonder freelancers therefore try to work directly for their own clients. In fact, they try to build up a portfolio including both 'direct' and agency clients – unless, as happens quite often – they are quite happy to work only *via* agencies. In any case, most freelancers keep working for agencies to bridge the gaps between their 'own' contracts.

Thus, any freelance translator will, at any given point in time, be on the books of many translation companies or agencies. All translation companies and agencies carry out a relentless 'hunt' for freelancers, both because the diversity of demand in terms of domains and languages makes it an absolute necessity to be able to draw on an impressive pool of possible operators and because any translation company or agency hopes to attract the 'cream'; *i.e.* completely autonomous sub-contractors, who can supply a high quality 'all-in' service, with no need for expensive and time-consuming proof-reading and editing, and who can call their rates or fees and decide on schedules.

At least in theory, the Internet now gives freelance translators easier access to work providers. The Internet means:

- that any translator can now advertise his services for the benefit of potential work providers, *via* a personal Web page or *via* dedicated portals where translators deposit their resume;
- conversely, that any work provider can avoid expensive and time-consuming calls for tenders by inviting freelance translators to bid for their contract on-line.

This way, freelance translators can ideally bypass the 'middle men', at least partly, and cut out, or substantially reduce, the cost and effort of prospecting for clients. In practice, things are not so simple and the general idea is that portals and exchanges may work for some translators but not for all of them, with the complication that rates through portals are usually low to very low.

Freelancers being ill-equipped to face the demands of the marketplace individually, more and more are now working in partnership with others to set up 'virtual companies' under the guise of consortia that allow them:

- to offer clients a wider range of specialties and language combinations,
- to reduce the financial outlay by sharing the cost of expensive software and equipment,
- to meet shorter deadlines for large contracts by sharing out the workload.

Translators working in partnership – whether it be a network, an association, a service exchange system, a translation pool, or any other system – can offer very much the same range of services as a translation company, while allowing those clients who so desire to maintain the personal contact that they are accustomed to with ‘their’ translator. Consortia are all the easier to organize and run now that modern means of communication allow partners to be located anywhere in the country, or even in different countries. Each translator can therefore set up a network and – in theory – gain access to the market for huge contracts, just like any translation company. Like the companies, and for the same reasons, translators are going global, which is all well for those living in low-cost low-rate countries costs but not so fascinating for those who live in countries where the cost of living and translation costs and fees are high.

One particular type of partnership is that set up by umbrella companies when the ‘members’ work in teams, receiving a ‘team bonus’ over and above their regular salary, along the lines of the Tupperware™ system. In this case, if one team member’s work is not up to standard, another translator under the same umbrella will edit the translation and make any necessary corrections. The company running the network will often also double up as a broker, negotiating contracts directly with the work providers and farming them out to the ‘members’ (*i.e.* the salaried freelancers who work for the organization). This type of set up combines all the different types of work organization and status, *i.e.* salaried employees, freelancers, ‘consultants’ for umbrella companies, and brokerage, with the ‘employees’ working from home in a ‘virtual’ company setup, which allows those who are so inclined to keep their own clients while benefiting from all the advantages of the network.

6.2 The translation companies’ offer

Strictly speaking, a translation company is defined as an entity whose **salaried** staff carry out translations (or other services) in-house or on the client’s premises, either for security reasons or because the client uses special software or equipment or resources not available elsewhere.

Translation companies employ a number of translators, technical writers, revisers, or terminologists, plus a number of experts in other areas who keep the wheels turning. The latter will generally include sales staff (who ‘win’ the contracts), IT experts (because language services are now entirely computerized and because all but a handful of translation companies offer ‘localisation’ services involving complex ‘value-added’ operations, a finance department, a technical department, a publishing (or desk-top publishing) department, a Web mastering department and, in some cases, a human resources manager.

Contracts are managed as separate projects under the responsibility of project managers and the company will frequently include a terminology-management department and a documentation service as well as a 'quality control' section with a number of proof-readers and revisers, one of whom acts as quality manager for the whole company.

Translation companies will, as a rule, offer as wide a range of services as possible, to the point of taking charge of a client's multilingual documentation or international communication policy. If need be, they even do the mailings.

It has to be stressed that *bona fide* translation companies do not make a habit of resorting to sub-contractors. It is normally something they do only when confronted with a particular need in a particular domain or language combination – where hiring a full-time in-house translator would obviously not make sense – or when they need to spread the workload in the face of sudden surges in demand.

It must also be remembered that a translation company's rates will always be higher than those of a freelance translator, simply because the company has all kinds of additional costs (*i.e.* sales, accounting, IT maintenance etc.) and overheads that the freelancer does not have.

The remarkable features of translation companies are:

- the large number and great diversity of language combinations,
- the wide range of domain specialisations,
- the wide range and diversity of available technical equipment and software (platforms and applications),
- the wide range of services provided,
- a proactive approach to business,
- the knowledge of, and ability to implement industrial processes,
- the wide range of available resources.

Beyond the fact that their work is carried out 'in-house', there are three major types of translation companies:

- those that generate substantial turnover and employ large to very large numbers of salaried staff;
- those that are managed by translators acting as 'middle-men' between the work providers and other translators, but where most of the work is done 'in-house';
- those that consist of partners joining forces to supply a service in a particular language combination and in one or several specialised domains.

All three of the above types of translation companies may also do some brokering, but this generally remains a secondary or peripheral activity.

The first type of organization is generally referred to as a 'translation company', while the second and third types are referred to as translation 'bureaus', although this term is also used for 'agency' type organizations.

A new type has emerged: the Web agencies. These are not, properly speaking, translation companies. They are companies providing all kinds of services associated with the Web, prominently Web site design and localisation, including translation of site or page contents. In some cases, such Web agencies have included translation into the service they provide in-house, therefore qualifying as translation companies in that respect. In other cases, such Web agencies concentrate on the most lucrative part of Web site creation, maintenance, and localisation and farm out the 'translation bit' to outside sub-contractors (linguists). Technically, Web agencies put globalisation and localisation in the right perspective since they take care of the whole process, including the 'language component' (meaning the linguistic-cultural component) and do integrate that component way upstream in the whole localisation process.

Translation companies are now engaged in a process of restructuring and consolidation, nationally and internationally – which, for the bigger ones, means globally. The people behind the deals may sometimes be the owners of existing companies but most often are financial investors or IT companies.

The globalization of the translation industry is well underway thanks to the acquisitions and mergers that have led to the creation of large multinational groups. Investors interested in the translation sector or owners of prosperous translation companies are naturally tempted to build up an international network of translation companies (through acquisitions, joint ventures, minority equity investment or share issues) with companies in say, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy, Ireland, the UK, the United States, Canada, Portugal, Kuwait, Australia, China, India, Japan, etc.

This strategy means that a given company can rely on the backing of a powerful group while gaining access to markets in different parts of the world and to the pooled resources of all the sister companies – particularly the terminology resources, which can be used not only for translation purposes but to feed into all kinds of rapidly developing machine translation systems using voice recognition and voice synthesis features. It also means that the tariff structure can be optimised: ideally, translations can always be carried out in the lowest-cost country for a given language combination (all the better if the client's country is a high-rate one). At the same time, different time zones lead to 24/24 availability (Seen from Paris, France, the translator in Australia or Honolulu or Anchorage or on the West Coast of the USA does not sleep at night. ...) Finally, by extending their network of subsidiaries or sister-companies, translation companies can guarantee that most translations will be carried out – or at least checked and revised – by

native speakers in the country of the target language and culture, which is no mean advantage.

While globalisation carries on apace, intranational networks are also being set up to bring the translation business closer to each potential client. Large national translation companies have therefore set up local branches (or simply offices) in areas where demand is significant, so that clients get the local business contact that is essential in a business firmly based on trust and reliability (and therefore proximity), even if the actual translations are carried out anywhere else in the same country or abroad – which the client need not know, and probably does not want to know, or would even appreciate if he was told that having the document translated by a native speaker in a target language and culture country will enhance quality.

A further trend that concerns translation companies is the development of franchises, as in any other business sector. This means that a translation company will ‘sell’ its name and its marketing know-how to other companies, and provide support in marketing, prospecting, installing new premises, purchasing equipment and software, as well as, more generally, in project and business management. As with acquisitions and mergers, the end result is the development of networks of companies which all mesh together to form worldwide translation ‘Webs’.

Concentration goes hand in hand with extended responsibilities for the translation company translators. Each salaried translator is now likely to be handed a portfolio of clients to manage, often with a considerable amount of leeway (providing the results are there). Salaried translators are therefore becoming more autonomous within the company at a time when more and more freelance translators are pooling together in what are, to all intents and purposes, business organizations.

6.3 Brokerage companies and agencies

Brokerage companies are business entities (often single-person businesses) that sell translation (as a finished product) to clients and buy translation (as a service) from translators (or translation companies) usually taking a significant amount of commission for their pains.

Technically, translation agencies are also brokers, but unlike the brokerage companies, they usually actually play some part in the translation process itself, at least as regards file preparation, proof-reading and formatting for instance.

The most basic types of agencies are no different from brokerage companies when they buy and sell translation contracts for a commission without actually getting involved in any way in the translation process. The more sophisticated agencies lie somewhere between a broker and a translation company. All agencies share the following features:

- most, if not all of the translation jobs, are outsourced;
- the services performed in-house (such as accountancy, management, project management, proof-reading, source material preparation, software integration, Web site conversion, etc.) are not the main part of the business, even though they may actually be more lucrative than the outsourced services;
- outsourced services represent the core of their business;
- agencies employ few salaried translators;
- there are always fewer in-house staff (the manager, permanent employees or temporary staff) than sub-contractors – by a long shot.

Standard brokerage companies and agencies always rely on external translators (freelancers or other agencies, who may in turn sub-contract the work) to do the actual translating.

Typically, a translation agency or bureau relies on:

- sales staff, whose job is to find new contracts,
- administrative staff,
- a part-time accountant;
- one or several word processing and formatting operators plus, in some cases, a desktop publishing specialist and graphic designer working on both paper and digital media,
- an ICT engineer,
- several proof-readers or revisers,
- a handful of in-house translators-cum-project managers,
- the vital database of freelance sub-contractors, who must be as many and as diverse as possible in terms of language combinations and domain specialisations and hopefully ‘autonomous’ in not requiring revision.

Recent years have seen a tremendous growth in brokering and agency activity, with agencies and bureaus getting more diversified in terms of size and structure. Four main trends are noticeable in this area:

- Translation brokerage companies and agencies all go fishing on the Internet for more and more possible sub-contractors. Some have set up Internet portals inviting bids for translation contracts, offering translators space in which to display their resume and in some cases, organising translation auctions in what is in effect an on-line brokerage service.
- Many such businesses now employ one or more IT specialists who are in charge of disassembling multimedia source material and then re-integrating the translated text into the finished product and onto the final medium with the translators taking care of the ‘linguistic’ component of localisation.
- Given the cost of employing ‘in-house’ proof-readers and revisers, agencies naturally seek totally autonomous translators (translators who produce high

quality translations that do not require any proof-reading or editing). Failing this, they have started outsourcing the revision work just as they outsource the translating, with a junior translator doing the initial translation and a more experienced one revising that translation – both being paid in proportion to the time and effort spent on the job.

- Finally, brokerage companies and agencies are also tempted by globalisation, either by moving the company headquarters to a tax haven, or by hiring translators who live in low-cost countries, or both.

Incidentally, agencies and brokerage companies always base their sales pitch on the fact that, whatever the constraints and specifications, they will find the translator best suited for the job in hand.

6.4 Miscellaneous offers

Over the past ten years or so, various companies and businesses, notably consultancy companies and companies involved in engineering and design, have added translation to their standard range of services, offering their clients both (1) a translation and multilingual documentation service – thus acting, to a certain extent, as translation *companies* – and (2) a translation or multilingual documentation **management** service – thus acting as translation and linguistic service *agencies*. Given the special relationship between consultancy companies and their industrial clients, that trend is likely to accelerate in the future.

As a matter of fact, the tendency is now for all service providers to go ‘all-inclusive’: many technical consultancy or engineering businesses are throwing in the linguistic ‘bit’ while, conversely, many translation companies are offering more and more IT services, documentation management, and even technical support.

Then, there are the **pseudo-companies**, which are either (a) single-person businesses wishing to attract clients by putting up an impressive front (b) mere commission agents. The former are accused of unfair competition by the *bona fide* companies whose taxes and overheads are naturally higher than those incurred by sole traders. The latter usually take their cut off the translators’ work with little or no added value in exchange.

Pseudo-companies are in fact brokerage companies of two kinds: the ‘letter-box’ (now an electronic mailbox) and the ‘student intern house’

- The ‘letter box’ or ‘electronic mailbox’ company may literally offer no more than a letter box or an e-mail address with one person getting the orders, dispatching the translations, getting the translations back and sending them off to the clients;
- The ‘student intern house’ usually employs only one person (the manager) and relies on a constant stream of student ‘interns’ to proof-read the translations

and even, sometimes, to dispatch the work to their sub-contractors – if not to ‘manage the projects’!

From a general point of view, resorting to students on temporary internships is a strong temptation, simply because (a) it helps to meet workload peaks without having to create too many jobs, and (b) it is inexpensive.

The companies involved can easily allay their consciences by arguing that they are giving students ‘real hands-on training’ (as opposed to a purely academic approach) and that ‘sandwich courses’ (whereby the student spends alternating periods of study at the university and work experience in a partner company) are ‘of benefit to all concerned’.

Having student interns is quite natural – and all concerned should be encouraged to have more. What is unreasonable and unfair is having no staff apart from student interns who therefore get no actual support and no real training.

The two extreme types of pseudo-companies above are just interested in cutting production costs, taxes and overheads. They usually do quite well, because (a) all investment costs and risks are transferred to the sub-contractors, (b) the running costs are low and (c) they care little about losing clients or subcontractors because they know there are quite a number of translators who will be grateful for any job at just about any rate and that many translation requesters are interested in nothing but the price-to-price ratio.

Language service companies offer a comprehensive range of language-related services, including translating, technical writing, language audits, human language processing software development and adaptation, and company language policy consultancy services (*i.e.* how to manage the company’s translation, multilingual and multimedia documentation and also language training needs). Some of them also run language training courses for businesses – thus filling the vacuum left in many countries by academic institutions, many of which have still not grasped the fact that languages can be used professionally and are not simply there to be ‘taught’ as an academic subject.

This is how the manager of one such language service company describes the services on offer:

“Our core business is corporate documentation management (including design, implementation and conversion), but our leading activity by far, in terms of turnover, is translation and localisation, that we do in-house rather than as brokers. In that sense, I suppose we are a translation company. We also do some multilingual Web site referencing, some training, technical writing and consultancy work (documentation life-cycle, management procedures, and computer-assisted translation systems implementation). Our strengths lie in our specialisation and our multi-user capability on major contracts”.

Language service providers are likely to develop rapidly over the next few years, in line with the new trend towards provision of all-inclusive services.

Language schools, too, offer to carry out translations. The commonly held belief whereby “*anyone who has studied languages can translate*”, naturally leads others to conclude that “*anyone who translates can teach languages*”. A number of translators therefore boost their incomes by teaching foreign languages, and nearly all language schools (particularly those run by local Chambers of Commerce) offer to ‘do’ translations, which are naturally ‘done’ by their language teaching staff. Some such schools also now offer (expensive) translator-training courses – after a fashion.

6.5 Blurred and changing contours

In fact, the different business categories constantly change and overlap. At any one point in time, some will be repatriating most of their work in-house (thus becoming true companies), others will be outsourcing more and more of their business (thus working more like agencies) and others still will be carrying out absolutely no translation work in-house (thus acting as brokers). One can simply say that any business is a mix of the three functions in varying proportions: a translation company does little agency work and next to no brokering; an agency outsources most of the translation/translating but may have an in-house translation activity; a brokerage company just inter-mediate offer and demand.

Each manager will in effect opt for the most effective denomination in terms of marketing advantage. Given the wide range of business denominations and structures in the translation industry, the legal status of the entity is often the only solid ground on which definitions can be based: some may opt for a ‘limited liability company’ status, while others might shy away from the ‘corporate’ image and prefer to be seen as a consultancy firm working under a limited partnership arrangement, very much like lawyers or architects.

The crux of the matter is the collection of translation contracts of increasing volume and technical complexity. Hence, the importance of commercial staff, with an increasingly marked presence of translators in that ‘new’ field of activity.

Many translation brokers have moved towards an agency-type structure, with at least part of the service carried out in-house. This usually means physically processing the material, taking care of proof-reading and revision, and, in some cases, of any IT operations required at either end of the translation process.

Translation companies proper have gone through a process of concentration while extending their offer in terms of services: everyone now talks of translation service provision or language service provisions. Such companies have been expanding regularly and many have now developed worldwide networks. In most cases, at least 90% of their business is usually with their **own** clients (even though

they may still occasionally carry out some subcontracting work for brokers and agencies) and all of them – as stated above – have put particular emphasis on the commercial side of the business. Hiring personnel in charge of selling translations to customers has been one of the major changes in the translation industry over the past ten years. Finding translators to do the job is usually no problem – except if you want none but the best. In fact, that job goes by the name of ‘pre-sales manager’ and covers all of the negotiations with the client prior to the contract being signed.

As a matter of fact, confronted with increasing volumes, the translation companies farm out whatever work cannot be dealt with in-house, either because they have not got the manpower (or do not want to hire extras), or because the work is not within their field of competence. This can lead to situations where one translation company may be carrying out a contract on behalf of a brokerage company or another translation company, while at the same time contracting out part of its own workload. The significant feature of companies such as these, however, will remain the fact that most of their work is carried out in-house by **salaried** translators. Alternatively, most of the work carried out in-house is done by salaried project managers managing freelancers, which, to all practical purposes, turns what legally remains a company into an agency.

The trend over the past few years has definitely been towards more ‘indirect’ translation (*i.e.* translations outsourced by an in-house translation department, a brokerage company, a translation agency or a company) and therefore a noticeable rise in sub-contracting (both in terms of demand, and even more significantly, of supply).

Given that translation agencies often boast that they have hundreds or even thousands of translators ‘on their books’, and that any new translation company or agency setting up business is immediately submerged with hundreds of offers of service from freelance translators, the situation might, on the surface, appear to be ideal. And yet, many companies complain that they cannot find the staff they need to meet their requirements (and have to put so much effort into quality control and upgrading of subcontracted translations) while budding translators complain they cannot find work (because agencies, which are the ‘easiest’ option for the beginner, are of course looking for seniors requiring little or no revision) and are reluctant to go into sub-contracting to translation agencies (because ‘own’ clients are both more easily accessible and more ‘lucrative’ in the sense that no one will be raking off a commission).

Unless they are fortunate enough to have their own ‘captive’ clients, or to be regularly supplied with work by translation companies and agencies, many freelance translators try to go it alone, and compete for contracts with translation agencies or companies, particularly now the Internet has (theoretically) made it so much easier to address potential clients directly. Many end up establishing

networks and setting up ‘virtual’ entities offering services very similar to those offered by *bona fide* translation companies or agencies.

In any given national market, the translation industry is in a constant state of flux, with new freelance translators or translation companies setting up business, while others are disappearing.

Freelance translators usually give up because of lack of work and because they grow tired of forever having to struggle to find new contracts. In many cases too, translators may suddenly find themselves in trouble due to the demise of their main (and sometimes only) client.

Translation businesses can go under for the same reason, *i.e.* because they happen to lose a couple of major contracts or clients where the management has failed to diversify the company’s customer base. Or some of their staff may decide to ‘go it alone’ and ‘walk off’ with one or more of their (major) clients, if not all. Major contracts (*i.e.* several thousand pages to be translated into a dozen or so languages) are often a decisive factor behind the birth or death of translation businesses.

The outsourced side of the business is also a constantly changing scene, with a small ‘permanent cast’ and a large number of ‘extras’. As we have seen, agencies usually try to build up a pool of reliable sub-contractors, some of whom become regular contributors and are – in the agency’s wildest dreams – expected to become their ‘exclusive’ full-time translators. It is also to the freelancers’ advantage to strike permanent commercial relationships with a limited number of **reliable** agencies (both in terms of work supply, support and payment).

On the other hand, there are agencies that swap from one translator to the next (sometimes because their financial situation and practices are rather shaky) and translators who flit from one agency to another. But everyone does hope to strike the kind of stability that is conducive to greater productivity (speed increases as partners know each other better) and to enhanced quality (increased familiarity with the work provider’s business, products, requirements, and industrial processes is a guarantee that quality will follow suit).

7. Markets and the organisation of demand

More figures

When it comes to markets, figures are of utmost importance. But figures relating to the different translation markets throughout the world must be approached with extreme caution, for the following reasons (a) It is impossible to identify all practising translators, either because many are not officially registered, or because they are lumped together with other professional categories and may thus simply

not be identified, (b) those carrying out the surveys are often unfamiliar with the translation industry and may therefore make the wrong assumptions when extrapolating figures, (c) authors of surveys and reports often tend to copy what previous surveys have reported, (d) in most surveys, the turnover generated by sub-contractors is counted twice: on their own account and as part of their work providers' accounts and (e) one should not overlook related jobs and activities in support of translators and localizers (administrative and support staff, integrators, printers, publishers, project managers, etc.). Traditionally, translation market figures usually refer to business carried out by freelance translators, agencies and companies, to the exclusion of translations carried out in-house within companies or organisations, which are part of the company's or organisation's turnover (although part of the translating required may be farmed out to external translators, therefore feeding into the external translation markets and being taken into account in the overall figures).

To give just a few indications:

A 1997 report by Bureau Van Dijk, commissioned by the European Commission's DG XIII has the following information which most professionals say must be taken with a big pinch of salt. . .

- Total turnover from translation and interpretation (commercial market, excluding official language services): €3.75 billion (*i.e.* €10 per inhabitant or 0.52% of GNP).
- Market shares by type: specialised translation: 80%, translation for publishing: 20%
- Source languages: English is by far the predominant source language.
- Volume growth 1994–97: up 55% (but translation jobs up by only 18%, due to increased productivity).
- Growth forecasts (1997): annual volume growth of 5 to 20% and employment growth 3 to 7% depending on national market factors.

Other significant facts worth mentioning include the following:

- Common Sense Advisory estimates that the market for outsourced language services was US\$ 8.8 billion worldwide in 2005, growing at 7.5 percent per year to over US\$9 billion this year (2006).⁴
- Common Sense Advisory regularly publishes reports on the translation-localization industry. Of special interest is the one called "Ranking of top 20 translation companies for 2005", published March 2006.
- The average translation agency has an average portfolio of over 20 freelancers covering an average of 20 languages.

4. http://www.commonsenseadvisory.com/research/reports_category.php

- All sectors of the translation markets are growing in volume (at annual rates of between 5 and 30%). Employment in the profession has been growing more slowly, due to increased productivity, at 3 to 4 % each year, but with peaks of 25% or more in areas such as localisation and multimedia translation.
- The downturn in the telecommunications sector in 2001 had a knock-on effect on the translation markets in that same area (down 60% in some sectors) and some translation companies which had relied on one or a handful of clients in the area were left high and dry.
- It is estimated that the localisation and multimedia sectors account for over half of the technical translation markets.
- In the European market, English is the most widely used working language for translators, followed by German and Spanish, in joint second place. The demand for translation into English is growing exponentially and more and more major companies now want their corporate literature to be written directly in English.

The fastest expanding markets for translation fall into three categories:

- the countries that join, or are set to join, or hope to join multilingual entities (as is the case with Europe, where a translation industry usually springs up in ‘newcomer countries’ in the wake of the translation of all existing official treaties, conventions, regulations, and documentation)
- developing countries, where the birth and growth of commercial and industrial activity fuels demand for translation, the case in point being that of China, where there has been an awesome increase in the volumes of translation, with subsequent dearth of qualified personnel.
- India (Bangalore) as a category of its own, where a technical communication and translation industry has mushroomed in the wake of globalisation in all kinds of service industries originally linked to ICT and is thriving.

The overall market’s potential for development is, to a large extent, based on the exponential growth in the multilingual (and multimedia) communications sector. This explains why translation companies have been taking on so many commercial staff in recent years, to go out and get as big a share of the cake as possible. The markets still to be conquered include in particular the multilingual Internet documentation market and markets for new types of services. Those translators capable of addressing the Web site creation and maintenance end of the market and not simply ‘*translating the pages*’ have already moved into some sort of Promised Land and many are following suit.

This being said, translation markets are essentially diverse. Any market segment is a combination of hierarchically organised features and, like all markets,

the translation markets may be rightly defined as a sum of innumerable market segments, some clearly identified, other more hazy. Any given market segment is the result of the intersections of any combination of language pair and direction of translation, territory, degree of specialisation, category, context, scale, accessibility, volume, and scope of service.

7.1 Language and directionality

Obviously, market segments are organised by language combination and direction of translating. There is such a market as translation from Chinese into English (possibly not different from the market for translation from English into Chinese).

7.2 Territory

Of paramount importance is the diversity of sub-markets per language market. There is usually at least an international market and any number of local markets.

The international market is where jobs are put up for grabs for anyone irrespective of geographical location. It may be a cheaper alternative for the work provider as well as a better source of income for translators in low-cost, low-tariff countries.

The local markets are those that do not extend beyond the limits of the area considered, which may be a city, a region, an island [Madeira for Portuguese], a country [Belgium for German, but also, naturally enough, Germany for German].

7.3 Degree of specialization (general vs. specialised)

For any one particular language pair and direction of translating, specialist market segments may be roughly defined according to combinations of the following three parameters:

- the intrinsic degree of specialisation of the topic, theme or subject matter to which is added the degree of technicality and complexity of the material to be translated,
- the medium (*e.g.* video, film, digital code, etc.) and the nature of the code which define the software, Web site and more generally, multimedia translation and localisation markets,
- the degree of specialisation of the processes, tools and procedures involved, because such tools and procedures require additional training and are synonymous with leading edge technical competence.

Incidentally, the use of translation memory management systems has never been considered as particularly technical or specific. Most people consider

these applications as ‘translation aid tools’ which are of no use outside the translation industry, meaning that translators ‘choose’ to use them for their own benefit, and that they should not therefore be awarded any recognition for additional ‘technical’ skills in that respect.

The combination of these three factors defines six major market sectors, ranked here by what might be considered as increasing degrees of specialisation:

1. The **general translation market**, which does not require particularly advanced knowledge or skills, and is generally less rewarding financially than the specialised translation markets, unless the translator can offer ‘premium’ services such as page layout, desktop publishing and the like.
2. The **general translation market with a specialised bias**, where the translator translates mostly all kinds of material plus some specialised documents, using the standard functions of standard office software (*e.g.* word processing);
3. The **specialised translation market** (including pseudo-cloning of Web sites), involving materials that are domain specific and the use of advanced software applications (*e.g.* translation memories or Web editors).
4. The **highly specialised market** (including cloning of Web sites) involving materials that are sub-domain specific and the use of specific IT tools (*i.e.* desk-top publishing, various automatic text processing systems, advanced multi-memories, subtitling software, infographics, etc.).
5. The **specific markets**, by medium or type of material (audio-visual translation, multimedia translation, translation of code, etc.).
6. The **high-profile markets** based on the specific tools or procedures and, one might say, the skills required. These markets generally come under the name of ‘localisation markets’, as if to separate them out from ‘mere’ translation and identify localisation as a value-added profession in its own right.

To be complete, one must add that segments 3 and 4 above are subdivided again, with any number of ‘niche markets’ generated by the convergence of technical hyper-specialisation of the materials, specialisation of the processes, tools and procedures required, and relative scarcity of the mandatory skills among the population of translators (at least for a while).

More generally, the market divisions above intersect to create more niches and generate a lot of added value: multimedia translation focusing on highly specialised subjects does command higher rates than ‘ordinary’ multimedia translation.

The ‘top of the range’ segment, the one that merges all the different types and degrees of specialisation, is of course the most attractive and lucrative one. And, from the moment it becomes clearly identified, it starts attracting more and more people – even to the point that special training courses are set up to respond to

what is thought to be a very special need (on the part of work providers) and source of income (for translators). It thus runs the risk of becoming saturated, losing its 'niche' status, with rates collapsing.

The above segmentation partly overlaps segmentation by category (below)

7.4 Category

Market segments are identified according to the types of materials to be translated, since these determine the procedures and tools that must be put to use and, therefore, the particular skills profiles required.

Along those lines, there is such a thing as:

1. a market for localisation,
2. a market for media translation,
3. a market for the translation of autonomous material (material that is not embedded into a particular support or medium).

The market for localisation is further segmented into:

- software localisation,
- Web site localisation,
- videogame localisation.

The market for media translation is segmented into:

- captioning (massively: subtitling)
- dubbing.

The market for translation is segmented into the various sub-categories as per domains (scientific, literary, biomedical, commercial, financial, technical, marketing, etc.)

Translators identify a market for software localisation, a market for subtitling, a market for multilingual Web site development, etc. which obviously require specialised skills that are often more highly valued than 'standard' translation skills. In fact, whenever the translator can call himself a localiser, a subtitler, a videogame localiser or a dubbing author, things get better, both from the point of view of self-esteem and from the financial point of view.

7.5 Context

Context is a mix of environment and beneficiaries/users. It depends primarily on the categories of beneficiaries (destinations), which determine the types of materials that are translated and/or the procedures and special requirements that apply.

There are four segments in this respect. The first three are specific; the last one includes anything that does not fall within any of those first three:

- translation for the publishing industry,
- translation for the Institutions (including Court translation),
- community translation,
- ‘open-ended’ translation.

7.6 Scale

The scale of translation service provision draws a line between industrial translation, on the one hand, and craft translation, on the other hand, with fast-growing semi-industrial translation in-between.

Industrial translation is translation carried out using industrial methods (see special section on industrialisation) whereas craft translation is carried out using more traditional methods. The distinction is basically one of volumes since huge volumes and diversity of languages call for multiplicity of operators and rationalisation of workflow and procedures whereas smaller volumes still allow individual operators to carry on as before, *albeit* with the addition and help of new ICT technologies.

7.7 Accessibility (open vs. closed markets)

On the highly strategic criterion of ease of access, one should distinguish the ‘closed’ or restricted markets, the ‘narrow’ markets that are open only to the select few, and the ‘open’ markets that are freely accessible to all and sundry. A comprehensive picture should also include the ‘grey’ or ‘black’ markets.

1. **‘Restricted access’ or ‘exclusive’ markets** are those that are virtually restricted to translators or to companies offering a very high degree of specialization (in areas such as international class advertising, highly technical financial or stock market translation, promotion of luxury goods, multi-million dollar contracts, etc.). The ‘happy few’ are selected by reason of their superior skills, long years of practice, and reputation.

Restrictions also apply with calls for tenders open only to pre-selected contractors (for instance under army public procurement contracts requiring national security vetting or, again, with subcontracting by institutions on the basis of pre-selection drives).

Note: A particular kind of restricted market is that of ‘sworn’ legal translation, where the criterion for access is not specialisation *per se* but official recognition by the competent authorities. The rates paid by the courts over the world are generally low – to say the least – and unrestricted availability is expected

of sworn translators and interpreters. Yet, many translators fight hard to be awarded the title of 'judicial expert' or 'court translator' or 'official translator' or 'sworn translator' because of the additional weight to a CV or visiting card and of the resulting rate 'improvement'.

2. **Narrow markets for 'exclusive contractors'** are the translations requested by work providers with regular and narrowly specialised needs. Such work providers have set up a restricted (virtual) pool of translators whom they consider entirely trustworthy and who have the responsibility for managing and carrying out all translation work on their account. Such pools build-up over the years and are very stable, with no one quitting and no one joining in. Translators in such pools are there because they have narrowed their client base down to the most rewarding (both in terms of subject area and, of course, financial gain). They also make significant productivity gains as contracts accumulate, since the materials to be translated generally become quite repetitive in the long run. Last but not least, given the degree of specialisation and homogeneity involved, these markets also enhance the opportunities for translators to build up expertise in a lifelong learning process.
3. By definition, **open markets** are not controlled by any one translator or group of translators. Here translators will find providers who are confronted for the first time with translation needs or who are looking for a new translator, either because they have not been satisfied with the work previously commissioned or because they want to take advantage of the competitive marketplace by putting out an open call for tenders (or, in some cases, because open calls are mandatory whenever public money is concerned) or because they are looking for a given quality/price ratio or simply because they just have no idea how to go about solving their translation problem.
4. Although the **'dark', 'grey' or 'greyish'** market segments may not be of interest to *bona fide* translators, they should not be simply swept under the carpet and forgotten. They include all the translation work carried out with no regard for tax and social security legislation and are therefore a major source of unfair competition for all legitimate operators. These market segments exist because:
 - having "*studied languages*" seems to many ample justification to "*do*" translations;
 - for a fair number of work providers, the one and only guiding principle is: "*the cheaper the better*";
 - job centres and employment offices often see translation as the 'easy option' to be recommended to unemployed language graduates who may be tempted to take contracts 'on the side' to save on the starting cost of equipment and contributions and, more generally, many translation graduates

who find themselves in dire financial straits for lack of 'official' work find it hard to resist the temptation to 'moonlight' in order to make ends meet.

7.8 Volume (large vs. small markets)

Within any given general market, volume – expressed as the volume of the material to be translated, multiplied by the number of languages involved – is a decisive factor that determines four categories of markets: major accounts, coherent markets, miscellaneous markets and ... the crumbs.

1. **The major accounts market** includes all big contracts involving a large number of language combinations and covering the whole process from the moment the original material is produced to the moment the translated material is made available on the media required by the work provider (CD-Rom, DVD, Web site, multimedia, paper, etc.).

That market is growing rapidly as a result of the tendency among major manufacturing companies to outsource the whole multilingual documentation production process. Only the largest translation companies and agencies can line up to compete for such 'contracts' (involving, for instance, 2,000 page-equivalent multimedia documents or technical manuals to be translated into 24 or 30 different languages) because they can draw on an extensive network of reliable, tested translators and have the wherewithal and the expertise to meet the very tight deadlines and the complex technical requirements involved.

Not surprisingly, those work providers who have gone through the long and expensive process of obtaining ISO certification and putting up extensive quality assurance procedures would be rightly reluctant to work with language service providers which cannot offer the same type of guaranteed quality certification. This does not mean that independent translators may not work for major accounts, but they are the exception and do so as freelancers hired by some agency or company. In the 80s, everyone used to work for IBM. Nowadays, it is hard to find a translator who has not worked for Microsoft or, rather, Lionbridge or Star Gmbh or SDL.

It should also be noted that such major contracts involve the translation of fairly repetitive documents, with frequent updates, and therefore require the use of various kinds of translation software, particularly translation memory management systems. The work providers themselves now often supply their translation contractors with the hardware and proprietary software needed to exploit the vast translation memories that they have already accumulated and that they naturally want to keep expanding.

This type of market therefore involves large volumes, a large number of target languages for the same source material, the use of specific hardware

and software resources, substantial repetition, the need to ‘capitalize’ on previously translated work, and quite stringent quality assurance standards. The contracts are usually the most lucrative by far, but access to this segment of the market is restricted as major accounts usually want a ‘one-stop shop’ rather than having to shop around themselves for a couple of dozen translators to meet their various market needs. To complicate things further, the departments in charge of purchasing translations apply the same procedures as they do for any other product and that means translation service vendors have to go through a time- and money-consuming process of bidding, tests and trials, screening, etc. and take great care to be competitive in terms of prices.

Major national and international institutions also feed the major accounts translation markets.

2. What we might call ‘**coherent markets**’ are those that can offer substantial and relatively standard contracts with volumes between 200 and 500 pages.

Though such contracts do not come under the ‘major accounts’ described above, they are generally provided by substantial companies working in the same business sector and with similar international requirements on the import or export side. The types of documents concerned are user manuals, technical reports, patents, user documentation, market surveys, general documentation, etc... Translations are not infrequently into two or three different target languages and one work provider may generate fairly ‘coherent’ markets in several languages and several subject areas. The translators who manage to corner these markets are usually ‘top-of-the-range’ translation companies or freelancers who have focused on particular clients and succeeded in creating a long-standing business relationship with them. This means those markets are coherent from the company’s and the translator’s point of view.

3. The ‘**heterogeneous**’ markets cover a wide range of domains, types and volumes. They are generally local translation markets that attract translators who have a good local reputation and are not exclusive in the type of contracts they are willing to take on. Contracts with multiple language combinations are the exception.

While they have long stayed out of reach of national or international companies, such ‘miscellaneous’ markets are increasingly ‘organized’ by translation brokering agencies, who do collect miscellaneous translation contracts and farm them out to the multifarious mass of translators they work with around the world, hopefully cashing in on rate differentials in the process. One such variant of organising miscellaneous markets is that of portals and ‘translation exchanges’ where translation requesters can put up their contracts for grabs and translators who have paid the membership fee can bid.

4. The ‘**crumbs**’ are generally picked up by young freelancers, who complement more regular work supplied by a number of more substantial clients (that is, unless they are unfortunate enough to be located off the beaten economic track). By definition, the ‘crumbs’ are totally fragmented and often supplied by rather difficult clients who know nothing about translation, deadlines or the going rates.

7.9 Scope (pure translation *vs.* extended service)

Finally, translation markets can be defined by the type of service required by the client or offered by the translator. One extreme is ‘pure’ translation and nothing else; the other one is just about anything that can be added, upstream and downstream, to the translating part to provide an extended or enhanced ‘all-in’ service.

1. ‘**Pure**’ translation consists in *translating text* only, to the exclusion of any other type of code, with absolutely no operation on the textual material. This, typically, is what translators do when they translate ‘text’, whatever the medium (paper, Web site, ...) using pen and paper or a word processor or even dictation (speech recognition) software.
2. ‘**Extended**’ or ‘**enhanced**’ service may include any of the following, and much more:
 - breaking down and manipulating the source material and the support medium,
 - extracting code, images, menus, illustrations, etc.
 - making a transcript of the sound track,
 - making a transcript from tape,
 - detecting time codes,
 - converting files into or from other formats,
 - setting up a particular translation environment,
 - preparing translation memories,
 - upgrading translation memories,
 - setting up terminologies,
 - validating terminologies,
 - qualifying the translation *via* a beta version test,
 - getting translated text ready for publication or preparing ‘camera ready’ material,
 - making a CD-Rom version of the translation,

- ‘cloning’ a translated site,
- referencing the site with search engines.

Requests for this type of extended or enhanced service are the rule in some specialized translation markets and are rapidly spreading to other markets, for three main reasons:

- the contents to be translated reach the translator (or rather, project manager) in so widely diverse formats from so many different content management systems and technologies that coping with formats and media has become inherent in the translation service;
- at the same time, the increasing sophistication of software now allows translators to extend the range of services they can offer. Subtitlers, for instance, are now almost always expected to do the initial segmentation and translators are expected to set up and provide a translation memory or to burn a CD-Rom, and so on. This is because anything the work provider can get on top of the translation proper is soon considered ‘natural’ and also because such extras can be provided on standard equipment, using standard, easily available software;
- last, but certainly not least, many translators are on the lookout for any extension or enhancement that is likely to generate (sometimes substantial) added value.

It remains for translators to make sure that no one succumbs to the temptation of offering service extensions or enhancements **for the same price**, in an attempt to gain a competitive advantage over the rest of the field. Otherwise, the exception will become the rule, with a relative loss of income for **all** translators.

7.10 Translator and translator strategy

The ultimate criterion when it comes to analysing translation markets is the translator himself, meaning that each translator (or company) creates his own market that combines any number of the above features.

Naturally enough, each translator aims at working within the particular market segment that brings the most rewards both in terms of interest and money. Whenever possible, he will concentrate on narrowing the segment to a particularly interesting sub-segment or even ‘niche’. Once that sub-segment or niche is secured he can enhance the value of his work by offering ‘premium’ services such as document formatting, desktop publishing, Web mastering, site referencing and any other ‘extras’. The individual translator’s ideal market tends to be as ‘closed’ and exclusive as possible, with a small number of selected clients offering large

volumes of work requiring special, high value treatment with mutual trust at the heart of all things.

At any given time, an individual translator's portfolio of clients determines his particular market, and indirectly, his professional 'profile', in terms of:

- working language combination(s): scarcity is the word
- domain specializations: where not too many people tread
- average contract volume: big is beautiful
- technical nature of the source material: code is better than paper; embedded code is better still
- specific hardware and software environments – sophistication does it
- client satisfaction and, therefore, contract renewal rates,
- market sources (*i.e.* how contracts are found and finalized)
- nature and contents of the service(s) rendered – preferably extended and enhanced

The aim, both for the freelancer who has to 'fight for' contracts and for the translation company acting as a go-between between translators and work providers, is to optimize market opportunities. This means achieving some or all of the following objectives:

- specializing (freelancers) or encouraging employees to specialize (in companies) so as to aim for the high-tech leading edge markets where competition is less severe because qualified operators are fewer and farther between;
- building up coherent markets by establishing a good business relationship with a number of high-volume clients in the same subject areas. This usually provides regular work, with lots of repetitions and updates and the advantage of familiarity that soon fosters productivity gains;
- going for the 'huge' contracts and trying to work with major accounts;
- gaining access to exclusive or restricted markets – if possible;
- extending the range of services offered, in particular by including all the high value-added services: high-tech and high-risk translation, IT processing, 'sensitive' material processing, Web mastering, integration of translated material into various media, etc.
- winning all possible accreditations and certifications;
- working for clients who accept none but the highest uncompromising quality because of the vital importance of the translations required.

In a nutshell, every translator or translation company should aim for the most exclusive niches in the most exclusive (sub-)segments of the most valuable translation (or, better still, localisation) markets possible – the plural being a guarantee against the sudden and unexpected drying up of any exclusive niche or segment.

Until quite recently, translators would start out in the 'run-of-the-mill' translation market, then move up to general translation, gradually shifting towards various domain specialisations before insisting on two or three premium areas of specialisation, if possible in the high volume multilingual documentation markets. The next stage, for the few who wanted greater rewards, was to focus on more highly specialized IT tools and more finely honed procedures.

Nowadays, things are quite different. The more advanced translator training courses offer a number of specialties and specializations as part of their normal curriculum and the young professionals graduating from these courses aim straight away for the more high-tech end of the market (both in terms of domain and in terms of the IT tools needed), in particular for the localization, audiovisual and multimedia markets with opportunities for more than 'just translating'.

Two points must be kept in mind at this juncture. First, 'premium' areas of specialisation change over time. Whenever a lucrative market shapes up, a growing number of players aim for it; the increased (fair and unfair) competition gradually lowers the going rates, and this in turn has an effect on the rates in the general market. Increasing rates in one segment of the market do not necessarily filter through into the other segments, but any fall in rates for specialised translation automatically has a knock-on effect on the general market by virtue of the fact that most work providers know about the lower end of the market anyway. Second, what used to be specialist knowledge and mastery of various computer assistance tools and so-called translation aids has been downgraded since mastery of the tools, techniques and procedures involved has become a matter of course and tends to no longer command much extra consideration – be it social or financial. One would think that localisation skills shall very soon be the standard and that 'ordinary' translation is on the way to be downgraded if not deprecated – and certainly depreciated, unless translators put a lot of effort into promoting all aspects of the profession.

The major factor over the last few years has been increased concentration on the demand side of the market, as source materials have become more sophisticated and volumes have expanded. The trend is towards concentration of diversified and complementary resources available through a 'one-stop shop' that will take care of the full service (or rather, services) required. This kind of 'one-stop shop' is either a major translation-and-localisation company (more often than not a multinational business) with all the necessary technical and human resources, or a network of agencies or brokers capable of summoning the combination of skills and languages needed for large-scale contracts. Today, Web agencies may well become that 'one-stop shop' for people who want to have a Web site developed only to find out that it must then be 'localised' into a variety of languages and realise, to their relief, that the Web agency managers will gladly oblige with that – for a compensation, naturally.

One of the forthcoming trends is for major accounts to set up a special translation management entity between themselves and the translators. Their preference goes to some sort of dedicated 'agency' or 'brokering service' staffed by some employees or just paid by the company to find and screen the necessary performers and to see the projects through. In time, the entity concerned would become independent or, rather, would act as a clearing house for the particular markets concerned.

To complicate things further for translators, there emerges a new trend whereby purchasing departments (or, on a much smaller scale, purchasing officers or agents) are being deprived of their autonomy. Purchasing tends to be subject to systematic calls for tenders resulting in lists of exclusive providers worldwide. This means that the purchasing departments or agents may no longer buy translation from their former suppliers if these are not officially listed. Fierce competition is becoming the rule and, cherry on the cake, there are indications that the time is near when, failing vigorous action by governments, reverse auctions – auctions in which the lowest offer automatically wins – may become the rule when selling and purchasing translations (just as any other product or service).

SECTION III

Becoming a translator

Should I or shouldn't I?

Have I got what it takes to be a translator?

Introduction

With a few notable exceptions, no one is a 'born' translator. Translation skills are acquired, either through training or through practice. Strangely enough, the first thing you have to learn when starting out in professional translation is to forget everything you thought you knew about translation. Some even say a detoxication cure is in order. Almost everyone has 'translated' at school or at university. But translation in a school or academic context has nothing in common with translating as a profession. Classroom or academic translation is first and foremost designed to assess the pupil's or student's mastery of language skills, the volume of vocabulary available in the foreign language or their ability to avoid 'language traps'. Being good at the formal academic exercise known as 'translation' cannot be extrapolated to mean that the people concerned have all it takes to be good translators.

Nor is having 'done languages' at school and university or having been connected in some way with documentation – and yet, many of the organisations in charge of drawing up skills profiles for job seekers are quick to recommend translating as a profession to anyone with that 'profile'. It may work in some rare cases, but by no means in all.

It is therefore essential to have a long hard think about what professional translation entails and to be aware of the fact that becoming a professional, full-time translator is like learning to ride a bike, in that it takes time (in the case of translation, it may be years) and can only be mastered after a lot of hesitation, wobbles and, in many cases, a number of cuts and bruises. Then one day, you take the stabilisers off and hey presto! you pick up speed and off you go. It all depends on the amount of practice you have had and the number of translations you have done, but no one knows why you suddenly get that exhilarating feeling that you have 'cracked it' at last.

Anyone thinking of becoming a translator should know (a) the prerequisites and conditions, (b) the recruitment profiles of translators, (c) the recruitment levels, (d) what the odds are that they will make it.

1. Prerequisites and conditions

From a purely administrative and legal point of view, in most countries of the world, absolutely anyone can practise translation professionally but it is advisable to have at least some prior inclination and qualities for the job.

In general, people come into professional translation from two opposing directions: from the 'language sector' on the one hand, and from the 'world of industry and techniques' on the other. 'Industry and techniques' are taken here in the widest sense and include expertise in any number of areas including commerce, law, mathematics, accountancy or aeronautical engineering. 'Sector' and 'world' are deliberate choices here to emphasize differences in perception and status.

The two categories do not always get on very well, as both groups are convinced that their own background is best suited to the needs of the profession – some would even go as far as saying that '**only** their background' is actually suited to those needs. This is a moot point, unlikely ever to be resolved, but whatever their background, good translators must all share the following qualities:

1. absolutely perfect mastery of the *languages* used, and especially the target language;
2. *multi-cultural competence*, either by upbringing or by education – 'culture' being meant here to include culture in its widest sense, but also technical culture, business culture, corporate culture, etc.
3. perfect familiarity with the domains they specialise in (either through their initial education and training, or – more probably – through self-tuition;
4. an absolute knowledge of what *translation* means, what it requires and what it implies;
5. no interest in proving that they are *better translators* than the next person: they are simply interested in doing their job as professionally as possible.

Just to show that there are no set rules in deciding who the 'best' translator is, here are three basic observations (which can be scientifically proven through simple tests).

- The qualities required of a translator may vary considerably according to the circumstances and to the type of translation required and everyone should be able to find the type of translation that they are best at. In translation companies, translations are allotted to various translators on the basis of their particular skills and competences. Some translators may be brilliant in some areas and relatively indifferent in others and a good project manager (PM) knows how to dispatch the jobs on that account.

As anecdotal evidence, the author can remember having been rated respectively first, third and ninth and last, by three different assessors, in the same

translation test for the same company. So? Well, the three assessors belonged to different departments within the company and therefore inevitably had different requirements and criteria. Incidentally, no one questioned the quality of any of the sample translations in terms of accuracy, rigour, consistency, etc. It is just that Marketing does not see things (and translation) the way Maintenance or Manufacturing does.

- A recruitment test involving six different types of documents (*e.g.* a newspaper article, a general text, some promotional material, a legal document, a specialised text and a technical document – the range of documents used in the admission test for the master's degree in translation at Rennes 2 University – will naturally enough first of all weed out those who know what translating means from those who haven't a clue. Then, among those who know, two clear sub-groups will emerge:
 - a) those who are obviously more at home with technical translation,
 - b) those who are more at home with 'text' type material where style and quality in writing are put to advantage.
- Translator training courses that take on applicants from both sides of the fence (*i.e.* languages *and* technical experts) show that success rates (in terms of those who, at the end of the course, can really perform well as professional translators) are very similar in the two groups. The only difference is that the 'technical experts' will continue to perform better with highly technical material, while the 'linguists' will perform better with 'text-like' material.

This means, among other things, that translator training courses should take into account the background of the applicants they select in order to promote employability.

2. Recruitment profiles

Recruitment profiles for professional translators (*i.e.* salaried translators, in-house translation service translators and freelance translators working as sub-contractors or wanting to do so) as derived from a survey of over four hundred and thirty job vacancy advertisements, display the following main features:

Job definitions

Vacancies are always advertised for a specific professional skill, *i.e.* translator, technical writer, translator-terminologist, terminologist, interpreter, project manager, localiser (often broken down into the specifics of 'software localiser', 'Web site localiser', 'video game localiser', subtitler, caption creator, etc.)

Native and working languages

For a given job, specific language pairs are always required.

In most major markets, translators usually only use one language combination, working into their native language, providing the foreign language is one which is in demand on that particular market. Usual practice is for translators to have two working languages as well as their mother tongue. A fourth language may be appreciated in certain contexts, but it is rarely a decisive factor, and is only a valuable asset if it is a 'rare' language. The question of which basic language pair is best depends on national markets and, to a lesser extent, on the international market though the latter is only of interest to people based in lower-cost countries, where their tariffs are in essence competitive.

Specialisms

A given company or organisation will always advertise translation needs in specific domains and this will determine recruitment policy both for in-house personnel and for freelancers. The specific domain needs will be determined by existing translation volumes or by the developing market areas in which the company or organisation would like to expand.

Tools and translation-assistance

Companies or services that have invested heavily in specific translation tools or intend to do so in the near future are obviously on the lookout for applicants who (a) are proficient in the implementation and use of such tools, (b) are likely to be able to advise wisely on which options to choose and (c) can train existing staff. Translation start-ups, for instance, are on the lookout for people who have the competence to decide on the equipment (and procedures) required and to take care of the implementation.

As we write (2006), over 95% of the job vacancies advertised specifically mention skills in the use of MT (machine translation) or CAT (computer-assisted translation) systems and over two-thirds make it a *sine qua non* condition. It is estimated that, within a year or so, MT and CAT skills will be mandatory across the board.

Training

Qualifications and training are a decisive factor: as employers are generally aware of which courses lead to which professional profiles, they will often consider that students from such or such a university do meet their specific requirements and have all the necessary skills and competences – if only because they've had the opportunity to judge from the performance of trainees and *alumni*. Graduating from a university with a strong reputation for being 'professionally-oriented' is as good as getting tons of certification.

Job advertisements for positions in translation **always** specifically mention what qualifications and training are required. One difficulty in tracing and analyzing job offers is that about half of them are exclusively available to the very few universities whose students are reputedly fine-tuned for the jobs concerned, which in no way means that the training profile is a strict and narrow copy of the recruitment profile in point – quite the contrary, in fact!

Expert knowledge

Expert knowledge in the domain area sought by the employer or work provider is a distinct advantage, which can give a head start to people whose original qualifications and training were in the specific field required and who have entered the translation profession in a roundabout way.

Experience

Experience is generally considered an asset and many jobs with responsibilities make three to five years' experience a pre-requisite. But this is not systematic. Employers will often consider that it is better to acquire experience within the company or service itself so as to develop the all-important 'in-house' qualities and 'culture'.

Generally, inexperience seems not to be a major handicap for applicants for jobs in translation, as long as they have been able to become familiar with the latest technological developments and methods at university. In localisation and related jobs, employers rightly insist on hiring people out of state-of-the-art training courses.

For a freelance translator, on the contrary, experience is essential: hence the fact that most freelancers spend a few years in rather secure salaried positions before going it alone.

In fact, the question should be looked at this way: if a translator has experience, that is an asset in any case; if he has no experience, he will have to accept to work for low-pay agencies or so-called 'word factories'. But inexperience can be more than compensated for by extra up-to-date technological wizardry or rare skills.

Professional competence

Pre-recruitment tests are the rule, unless the employer is fully confident, on the basis of the performance of prior recruits, that there is a perfect match between the applicant's training and the job profile.

It must be stressed once again that both international and national institutions and translation service providers repeatedly complain that there is a dramatic dearth of competent graduates and junior translators – hence, as noted, the temptation to set up their own 'translator-training institutes' or 'translator-training task groups' within promising existing schools.

ICT skills

A **full range of real ICT skills** (*i.e.* a good knowledge of formats and format conversions, software applications, hardware, platforms, coding, conversion protocols, file management, software installation, maintenance and disinstallation, tagging formats, data mining, model and template building, macro commands, main programming language functions and features, etc.), especially applied to computer assisted translation tools (translation memories, localisation tools, etc.) is sometimes **just as essential as a perfect knowledge of languages and intercultural skills**. ICT skills even take precedence over language skills in about one-third of the job offers.

Food for thought:

The following are four examples collected on the same day to illustrate the diversity of job requirements and profiles.

Example 1:

Ideally you should have at least 4 years of translation experience.
You must speak native level English and German.
Preferably some expertise in corporate governance, European law or tax.
French or Italian as second languages would be an advantage.

Example 2:

Fully bilingual in Japanese and English (additional languages very useful)
Advanced computer skills, including proficiency in Excel and PowerPoint
Typing speed of at least 50wpm
Great communication and organizational skills
Knowledge and interest of current affairs

Example 3:

The ideal candidate will have excellent communication skills, show knowledge of the translation field and be aware of the financial and marketing implications of their actions. S/he will also have exceptional computer literacy and a reasonable degree of the usual personal requirements associated with management of projects; *i.e.* accuracy, numeracy, literacy, the ability to prioritise tasks and meet deadlines, initiative, quality control, the ability to work unsupervised, efficiency, integrity and discretion.

Example 4:

The ideal candidate will have the following experience and qualifications:

- Minimum 3 years English/Spanish translating experience in marketing or communications environment.
- Prior experience/education in Business Marketing and Communications preferred.
- One to two years experience in media or Internet media related field preferred.
- Prior editing and writing experience.

- Prior experience working with content management systems.
- Bachelor's degree in journalism, communications, English, Spanish, translation (English/Spanish) or equivalent experience preferred.
- Advanced knowledge of the English and Spanish languages, including spelling, punctuation, grammar and translation.
- Ability to speak, write, and read fluent Spanish (prefer native speaker).
- Ability to translate approximately 3,000 words a day.
- Excellent editing and writing skills in both Spanish and English.
- Knowledge of Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, Netscape, Home-site, Dreamweaver, Textpad, Notepad, basic HTML, Quark, basic computer-assisted translation tools such as Déjà Vu.

3. Recruitment levels

Admittedly, in many businesses, translations may still be done in-house by bilingual or trilingual secretaries, personal assistants or other staff without any training in professional translation, particularly as regards the more commonly used languages – especially English. The proportion may vary from country to country but it is always too high with regard to the number of properly trained professional translators. In any major industrial company, no one can **actually** know, today, who has translated what, how, when, for whom, and at what cost.

However the growing number of university translation courses and translator training programmes has undoubtedly pushed up the requirements in terms of qualification levels. Nearly all job vacancies now specifically require people with post-graduate qualifications (M2) and this has also become true even as regards internships or work placements. At a time of rapid growth in the translation markets, translation companies have been offering more and more work and pushing up employment (both in-house, through the recruitment of salaried translators, and out-sourced in the shape of freelance sub-contractors) but have become much more demanding in terms of qualification levels and skills and competences. They are generally on the lookout for **four** main types of profile:

- translators willing to specialise in certain technical fields,
- domain experts willing to specialise in translation,
- quality control experts (revisers),
- project managers and ICT managers to keep the projects running smoothly.

Freelancers include both of the first two profiles, but 'domain experts' should be warned that launching into the translation market is no easy option and that starting a translation business is more difficult than most people imagine. A considerable number of businesses fail after only one or two years. This does not mean to say that the chances are nil, as a number of success stories prove, but it

does mean that there is no room for improvisation. The least that can be done is give it a hard think.

Incidentally, a new trend is emerging in English-speaking countries and much of Europe. This consists in hiring undergraduates as junior translators on the assumption that revision will follow. In fact, the requirement for revision has had the following effect: if revision is mandatory anyway, why not scale down requirements on the translation and let the reviser patch it up? So, the reviser is paid as the (senior) translator used to be, and the juniors are paid less. In the same vein, quite a few employers equate the English MAs with the new Bologna Master's degrees, meaning they expect students to qualify after four years at university instead of five.

4. Have I got what it takes?

The 'true or false' simple test on the opposite page may be useful to anyone considering a career in translation. The basic features listed apply to any kind of professional practise of translation, whether as a salaried or as a freelance translator. The aim is to put the translator's job into a realistic perspective.

The nine statements numbered 11 to 19 are not essential pre-requisites: experience shows that translators who do not initially possess these qualities rapidly acquire them once they start work. Number 20 is a given: anyone thinking about translating as a career normally loves working with foreign languages and anyone applying for a job as a translator implicitly 'is good' at languages. So, if the number of 'falses' in those statements is reasonable, there is nothing to worry about – if it is 'unreasonable', prospects look rather bleak for any profession. . .

When it comes to the type of translation that looks particularly appealing, it should be noted, as regards job prospects, that there are few openings in areas such as literary translation, audio-visual translation (particularly translation for dubbing) or in translation for the publishing industry. Many of the openings are in the area of technical and specialised translation, and more particularly in multimedia/multimodal translation and localisation of software, Web sites and video games. These are precisely areas that require skills and competences that go well beyond the love of languages and a real or supposed gift for translation.

Nº	Statements	True	False
1.	Translation is something I have always wanted to do.		
2.	I am really into anything to do with computers and information technology.		
3.	I never give up: I keep trying until I find the answer.		
4.	I am at home with anything technical.		
5.	I can cope with stress and working under pressure.		
6.	I am very well organised and very meticulous.		
7.	Having to work 14 hours a day would not put me off.		
8.	I feel happy working in teams; I love the give and take of teamwork.		
9.	I can put up with critical appraisal of my work.		
10.	The Web is my virtual home.		
11.	I'm good at improvising and I'm not adverse to risk.		
12.	I don't mind giving up part of my holidays.		
13.	I can adapt anywhere.		
14.	I'm always curious to find out how things work.		
15.	I'm a perfectionist.		
16.	I'm ready to change my plans at short notice.		
17.	I like interacting with other people, even when things get a bit tense.		
18.	I want to do a job that is constantly challenging.		
19.	I don't mind translating repetitive or run-of-the-mill documents. ⁵		
20.	I love foreign languages.		

Results:

20 'true': you have definitely got what it takes to be a good professional translator and all the better if your priorities are in that order!

1 'false' in the first ten statements: things are looking good.

2 'false' in the first ten statements: have another think about it.

3 'false' in the first ten statements: professional translation is probably not your cup of tea, either professionally speaking, or on a personal level.

5. Note that a 'standard' translator may, over the space of a month, translate an estimate, two birth certificates, a badly written user manual for a floor board planing machine, a sales contract for reconditioned second hand trucks, a list of parts names for an articulated tractor fork, a hotel brochure, three faxes, an order form for 200 tonnes of apples, two complaints letters, a press review, to name but a few ...

CHAPTER 6

The die is cast!

Alternatives and options

Introduction

There are those who become translators because they have always wanted to translate, others (probably most) by coincidence, out of necessity, through inertia, by accident, by sheer good luck, by losing their job, by falling in or out of love, or because they want to turn over a new leaf, with or without any prior training. But there are also those who *decide* to become translators.

For those, the usual stages are as follows:

- a) Choose a particular domain of activity
- b) Train to be a translator
- c) Choose a professional status
- d) Start out in the profession

1. Choosing a particular domain (if relevant)

Anyone deciding to go into translation will generally have some particular domain of activity in mind.

The usual domains mentioned at this juncture are:

- literary translation,
- translation for publishing,
- media translation,
- specialised translation, with a choice of one or more specific areas in particular, such as localisation, medical translation, scientific translation, legal translation, etc.

Access to the profession will vary according to the domain chosen and some offer only very restricted access.

1.1 Literary translation

Literary translation (translation of novels, short stories, plays, children's literature) is to a large extent dominated by a handful of 'authors-cum-translators' on the one hand, and academics specialising in 'their' authors on the other. Academics usually specialise in those authors they have studied, and on whose works they have written books and articles and even sometimes their PhD, and often translate more for pleasure and recognition than for commercial gain. In many countries (and China is a case in point), literary translation and publishing translations of foreign works are part of the research output expected of lecturers who work in language and literature departments.

The dream of any literary translator is to be acknowledged and 'hired' by a major publisher, the ultimate goal being to become *the* official translator for one or several authors – preferably successful or with recognised bestseller potential. Exclusiveness tends to be the rule and the arrangement gives birth to long-lasting author-translator relationships based on the trust that the translator has built up with 'her/his' author. Stable, long-lasting relationships (and even friendships) such as these foster the kind of mutual understanding and, in some cases, the complicity which leads to top quality translations. This satisfies both translators and authors: translators can hope to 'capitalise' by being called on to do the translations of all past and future works by the same authors and authors usually feel happier if their works are translated by someone who has already done a good translation of previous works and in whom they can have absolute trust. Incidentally, technical translators will also be familiar with this kind of 'trust building' exercise: their work providers too are keen to work with someone they know well and can rely on. Whatever the kind of translation, a trusting relationship between the translator and the work provider remains essential.

To come back to literary translation, anyone getting all starry eyed about the prospect of translating the G.K. Rawlings of this world simply because they "*loved the literary translation exercises*" must be aware that really busy literary translators are few and far between. As a matter of fact, many established literary translators confirm that the road to success is a long and winding one, that average income levels are modest by any standards and it takes a deep-rooted calling and, more often than not, alternative or additional sources of income to survive. Many find themselves having to resort to translating all kinds of pulp fiction or second-rate novels to make a living, even though it usually means working all hours for a meagre reward, or they have to take on general translation work until they can make a name for themselves in the world of literary translation.

There are several different paths that a budding literary translator can follow:

- Write an M.A. or PhD dissertation on an author, translate one or two of his works, and then approach a publisher with the translation.

- Stumble across an unknown but promising foreign author, buy the translation rights to his works and then sell the rights together with their translations once the author has become famous. The ideal situation is when a translator gets to translate a future Nobel Prize winner before he or she (the writer, not the translator) becomes widely known. Unfortunately, there are rather few Nobel Prize winners and most of them have already been widely translated.
- Discover an unknown but promising foreign author, become her/his unofficial or official translator while she/he is still struggling to make ends meet (and possibly help her/him to get published in your own country), then carry on as his translator (and, if possible, also as a friend) once the author has become well-known.
- Become an author in your own right, get your work published, make a name for yourself, then boost your income by becoming an ‘official’ translator for your own publisher (unless you are already earning a comfortable living from your own writing of course).

A more likely scenario:

- Do a post-graduate course and qualify as a literary translator, then hope that the compulsory work placements with publishers will allow you to gain a foothold in the business. Unfortunately, no data relating to employment figures or income levels for people who follow courses in professional literary translation seem to be available at present in most countries and it is a well-known fact that enrolment in professional literary translation courses is highly restrictive and that professional openings are scarce.

Unavoidably:

- Send one or two translations to a publisher and then keep on at them until you find out whether anyone has read your translations, who is in charge, when you can expect an answer, etc. In other words: hang on in there.

In most countries, the literary translator is paid royalties – usually in the form of an advance plus royalties beyond a predetermined number of copies sold.

1.2 Translating for the publishing industry

Translating for the publishing industry includes all kinds of works (essays, biographies, treatises, cookbooks, travel guides, guidebooks, manuals and methods, etc.) and touches on any domain from sociology to mathematics and architecture. All translators are potentially interested in that market and even technical or ‘specialised’ translators actually make it a rule to translate at least one work

for publication every year, just so they can experience the pleasure of, as they say, 'translating well-written stuff for once'.

All that is needed to get started is to do the rounds of the publishers or to find someone wanting (or hoping) to have some work published but is not quite sure how to go about it or does not know where to start looking for a translator. What this actually means is that you translate a book that you think might interest a publisher, look for a publisher willing to publish the work in your own country, and let the publisher negotiate the translation rights, which will generally be low or negligible if the original author is unknown.

This implies no undertaking on the publisher's part to pay for the translation or to give you further work, but it will enable you to carry out a full-scale translation and to see whether you really like this kind of work and can consider making it a profession.

1.3 Media translation

Media translation (or audiovisual material translation) is carried out by companies that have both the technical skills and the required equipment (recording studios, dubbing studios, subtitling studios, etc.). It is almost exclusively the preserve of those translators who have a solid grounding in subtitling, dubbing and post-synchronisation techniques and, more and more, of project managers who take care of much of the post-production of localised sound-tracks.

After receiving the appropriate training, there are two general career patterns. The first one is as follows: (1) gain experience in one of the post-synchronisation or subtitling-captioning-dubbing companies (Yes, they do take on interns!), and (2) accept any task so as to get acquainted with the full processes and get in touch with the highest possible number of people concerned one way or other, so that (3) try and build up a trusting relationship with actors and directors by producing high quality work, so that you become their favourite translator and, in your own small way, a member of the creative team. The second one is as follows: (1) find yourself in the right place at the right time by working for a translation company that has just pulled off a big contract for one of the production companies, and (2) start with corporate videos.

In all the cases mentioned above, the translator would be an employee, but media translators also work freelance.

1.4 Specialised translation

Some people become specialised translators because of their initial university education and training (*e.g.* in law, economics, computer science, biology, medicine, etc.), their mastery of languages, their gift for writing and their desire to go into

translation. Others follow specific courses, particularly in areas such as localisation or multimedia translation.

2. Training to be a translator

Unless your experience or prior training has enabled you to acquire technical expertise in a given domain, language skills and translation skills, translation strategies and proper knowledge of major translation tools, it is wise to begin by taking a dedicated translator-training course. Nowadays, it takes much more than technical expertise, language skills and translation skills to be fully operational in the translation industry. The additional skills and competences can be gained *via* a translator training course, and although completing such a course is by no means the only way of entering the profession, a well organised state-of-the-art course taking into account the latest technologies and methods considerably increases the chances of getting off to a good start. All kinds of schools, institutes and university departments now offer a whole range of programmes and courses.

2.1 Existing programmes and courses

The programmes and courses on offer are by no means identical, either in terms of content or in terms of recognition by the profession and, more importantly still, by employers and work providers. The criteria to look for when choosing a course that will lead directly to a job or to enhanced employability and career prospects, are as follows:

Duration

European directive N°89-48CEE of December 21.1988 stipulates that professional qualifications should be delivered after a **minimum of three years** study (including both theory and practical applications). Three years would therefore seem to be a minimum duration for a translator-training course. As a matter of fact, five years is much better and the Bologna process has quite fortunately made it the rule that translators should graduate after a two-year Masters course.

The longer the course the better since this provides more time for acquiring basic skills, more time for acquiring additional skills, more time for practise, and more time for crucial work placements and internships.

All things being equal, an employer will always take on the most highly qualified applicant for a position and that would typically be the holder of a postgraduate 'masters' type diploma in translation. Even most companies taking on interns have a marked preference for students engaged in a 'masters'

course (or more rarely, fourth-year students). Which goes to show that (a) employers do not put much trust in BAs in translation and (b) they are first and foremost interested in finding people who are immediately operational. Incidentally, conditions permitting, students tend to enrol for a graduate course at the university where they intend to do a postgraduate (Masters) course in translation. This gives them a better chance of being admitted to the postgraduate course because they will be familiar with the trainers' methods and expectations. It also means that extensive training can be planned over longer periods of time and that there are opportunities for alternating training periods and work placements.

Selectiveness

The best results are achieved by those courses that select their students on entry, simply because, bar a few exceptions, the quality of the intake naturally determines the quality of the output. Selective entry into translator training courses and programmes is the rule wherever it is legally possible.

National and international visibility

Translators operate in a world market. Choosing a course simply because it happens to be conveniently located (or for any other personal reasons) is never a good bet. Also bear in mind that university or school careers officers generally have no insider knowledge of the translation industry and job markets and therefore find it difficult to objectively assess the quality of the various courses on offer. Moreover, there are still no national or international surveys of translation courses taking into account graduate employment figures one, six, and twelve months after graduation. If such information is not obtainable, forget it!

Applicants should aim first and foremost for courses that are well recognised in professional circles (the degree of recognition can be gauged simply by phoning round a few translation companies or major translation work providers who will oblige by indicating where the various universities offering translator training stand employment wise). Universities themselves should also be in a position to provide the references of *alumni* now working free-lance and/or of employers so that candidates can get first-hand information on the employability record. *Alumni* of the programme should have formed an opinion that is worth hearing. If no contact is possible, again, forget it!

Long-standing programmes usually offer the best prospects, because they have had the time to build up a reputation with employers, are contacted by employers looking for particular 'profiles' and have established 'old girls' and 'old boys' networks. The reputation the course has with employers is particularly important, even when considering a career as a freelancer, as this guarantees that the training outcomes (skills and competences) are those actually sought by the work providers and, more generally, by the markets.

There is really such a thing as an employability premium for long standing institutions and, conversely, additional difficulties for newcomers.

Work placements

Opt for courses that make provision for the longest work placements and work experience (a total of **twelve months of work placements** over a three year vocational course seems to be a minimum).

ICT

Find out which courses offer the best access to state-of-the-art ICT in the field of translation. Good indicators are the number of computers **actually available** full-time to the students taking the translation course and the number of up-to-date recent translation/localisation software applications **actually available and in use**. A better indicator still would be the fact that the curriculum includes computer science and software/Web site development courses.

Course content

Courses offering strong skills in all of the basic domains or modes of translation [general and specialised translation, media translation, localisation and multimedia material translation] should be preferred as they open up a wide range of professional opportunities. Better still if top priority is given to ‘real’ localisation.

The effectiveness of the course in terms of acquiring the necessary skills and competences depends on (a) the actual duration of the course, (b) the degree of professionalisation as shown in the actual course components and (c) the actual involvement of practising professionals in the training process.

Preference should also be given to courses that offer additional skills and competences on top of the standard translation/localisation skills. The course should actually include, for instance, technical writing, terminology, and general and translation-specific ICT skills (*i.e.* advanced word processing, computer assisted translation, programming basics, Web site design, etc.), as long as these are not simply ‘trendy’ window-dressing designed purely for the course brochure and/or Web site. The contents and expected learning outcomes for each of these components should be detailed and this is the only way to determine whether they actually comply with professional requirements.

As said before, the essential criterion is whether the knowledge, skills and competences reputedly acquired during the course coincide with those expected by the industry. A simple way of checking this is to write the course learning outcomes and market expectations down in two columns, with the course outcomes on one side and the skills and competences expected of translators on the other. This is usually the acid test. It helps to focus on what is actually useful in professional terms, as opposed to what one finds personally appealing and attractive in course descriptions.

To find out what the market is looking for, simply do an Internet search on “*translation agencies*”. The agency Web sites you will find all offer a section called “*looking for translators*” or “*work with us*”, “*send us your CV*” or “*becoming a business partner*”. The list of questions you are expected to answer gives you a good idea what profiles and skills are required, which are usually very similar on all the Web sites.

What really counts is not how well the university or department running the course manages to beat its own drum, but how the course is seen by former graduates and by their employers. What counts are not so much the course headings (e.g. “*theory of translation*”, “*translation studies*”, “*contemporary approaches to X*”, etc.), which are often designed to flatter the ego of the person teaching the course, nor the course ‘contents’ (which are difficult to assess on the basis of a brochure or a Web site), as the actual learning outcomes and their usefulness in terms of getting a job after graduation (which, for freelancers, translate as managing to earn a decent living within a reasonable period of time and improving steadily thereafter).

The only two really important questions to bear in mind when choosing a university course in translation should be the following:

- how many graduates are actually employed and in what kinds of jobs?
and
- what future career prospects are open to those who have graduated from the course – meaning: (a) can they move on to vaster or more ambitious functions and (b) are they prepared for any future ‘evolution’ or ‘revolution’ in the translation markets?

All the rest is purely cosmetic and any self-respecting institution should be able to supply graduate employment figures, both immediately following graduation and within three months and six months of graduation. If not, or if the figures are below 80% in (freelance or salaried) employment six months after graduation, this is not a good sign at all because there is a chance of being in the unlucky 20%. ‘Cosmetic’ information includes the type of so called information that some magazines regularly devote to “*careers in translation*” or “*translator training courses*”: these surveys are often ill informed and do not give any indication as to employment prospects, or recruitment profiles, or expected learning outcomes. More often than not, they simply churn out the same time worn statistics and information dating back to the 1980s. In some of the so called ‘league tables’, some of the courses in the ‘top ten’ have actually long since disappeared. . .

Of course, recently established programmes have to be given time to prove their worth, but not indefinitely. It is all fine and well for teachers to experiment: they have a steady job. But, if the course is badly designed and badly run, students should not stay on to suffer the consequences.

2.2 Specific choices

When choosing a course, it is not particularly relevant to know whether the intention is to practise as a salaried translator or to go freelance, but the intended professional status and fields of activity *are* important.

2.2.1 *Professional status*

Although salaried translators and freelancers have widely differing outlooks and professional practices, they are all first and foremost translators, and a good translator can work equally well in a company and for his own account. Except in very rare cases when would-be translators are quite set on their options, no one can say how a career will develop over a number of years.

2.2.2 *Professional domain*

It goes without saying that anyone with sights set on becoming a literary translator, a media translator, a subtitler or a localiser would be well advised to choose a course which focuses more specifically – respectively – on literary translation, dubbing, subtitling, localisation or whatever particular field they are interested in.

However, it must be said that highly specialised courses in literary translation, media translation, localisation, medical translation, legal translation or whatever, can turn out to be double-edged swords: graduating with a degree in translation in a specific field can be a distinct advantage when applying for a job in the field concerned, but it can also be a major handicap if the markets for that kind of translation are very restricted or just happen to be closed.

The best bet still seems to be to acquire solid basic training as a good ‘all-rounder’ (*i.e.* a generalist translator with special skills, such as subtitling, localisation, multimedia translation, general legal translation, terminology management, technical communication, project management, translation aids and ICT) before considering possible **domain specialisations**. A comprehensive course aiming to provide a good grounding in all the essential professional skills and competences required avoids unduly restricting future employment prospects. At times, for example, the opportunities in such as media and pharmaceutical translation are rather scarce.

Be that as it may, it is important to consider that all university translation programmes generally have some bias. One may place particular emphasis on editorial documents or marketing translation while another may focus on technology and engineering, and yet another on media translation. Such diversity is a good thing in that it ensures the diversity needed to meet the multifarious needs of the various markets. But there are rather strong implications for anyone who actually has to choose a course.

All in all, it does seem rational to look for a course which appears to coincide with what you intend to do later. But it is equally rational to focus first of all on becoming a 'translator' with all the necessary skills, and then, having found a job or started practising as a freelancer, aim for further specialisation (or drift into it). Work placements are in fact the ideal testing ground, and it is far more effective to find a work placement in the field of particular interest than to enrol for a course which may seem attractive because it appears to be quite focused, but which may turn out to be totally lacking in substance.

Caveat

Becoming a translator entails learning to know what professional practice means and mastering the techniques required to practise general and semi-specialised translation, multimedia translation, legal translation, subtitling, software localisation, Web site cloning, terminology, technical writing, project management, and quality management. Specialising then means applying the skills and competences thus acquired to one or several specific domains and/or type of materials and/or technological platform.

Points to ponder

- An overwhelming 95% of the work providers, human resources managers and agencies contacted in a survey in 2000 and then again in 2004 stressed that the required professional profiles were undergoing radical changes. They expressed concern that what both long-established translators and fresh graduates could offer was **increasingly** out of step with demand.
- Surveys undertaken since then have consistently supported the view that most translators are poorly equipped to deal with current market challenges.
- As a quick tour of the 'current vacancies' pages on any translation company or agency Web site will show, full computer literacy (*i.e.* being proficient in the use of word processing and presentation applications, hardware and software management, file management, etc.) is now a *pre-requisite* for any position in translating.
- The ability to use specific translation software is now required in **all** the positions advertised.
- Over half the respondents say they are required to use the wider skills and competences now associated with the profession, particularly project management. The 'pure transfer' translator seems to be on the way out.

3. Choosing a status

3.1 Going freelance or taking up salaried employment?

When starting out as a translator, one of the first decisions to make is whether to go freelance or to work in a company or agency. This is a major decision and implies quite radically different options.

3.1.1 *Freelancing (Self-employment)?*

Freelance translation is perfect for anyone who loves being **independent**, is not adverse to risk, would rather choose his own clients, likes to decide when and how to work, likes running a business, and does not want to have to answer to anyone other than himself, while at the same time hoping to generate a higher income than he could expect as a salaried translator.

Freelancers see themselves as dynamic, business-like people. Choosing to be self-employed gives them ‘professional’ status along with architects, doctors and other highly qualified practitioners. Many translators see this as a way of being able to choose their clients and what type of text they want to translate; at least once they have managed to build up their business. It is also a way of escaping from the humdrum routine of large translation services and companies where – at least the way freelancers see it – translators tend to be given the same type of work day in day out and increasingly will simply be asked to ‘recycle’ and update existing texts and translations.

However, there has to be a flip side to the coin and freedom has a price.

First of all, setting up as a freelance translator requires increasingly heavy investment. This means a suitable office, state-of-the-art computer equipment, and more and more sophisticated and expensive software.

Then freelancers need to build up a strong customer base. A budding freelance translator spends a lot of time prospecting for clients and working out and drafting estimates and offers or proposals. This is where they have to be very careful not to get caught out. Experience shows that the first twelve months are relatively easy going, because family, friends and prior contacts in various circles can help find the initial contracts. It is easy to start thinking that this will last for ever. In fact, unless they have already managed to win over one or two major clients, the initial contacts soon begin to wear thin and getting new contracts becomes an uphill struggle.

While struggling to win over new clients, of course, translators are no longer translating, and the money no longer comes in. This is where the vicious circle sets in. In fact, it is when things are going well that freelancers need to make the biggest effort to find new clients if they want to stand a chance of achieving every freelance translator’s ideal, *i.e.* a small number of major first-hand (direct) clients who will supply them with work on a regular basis. In this respect, the freelance translator

is in the same position as the translation company, except that the company finds it easier to spread out the workload and can employ someone specifically to look after sales. The key to any translation business is how to sell translations. Actually doing the translation is easy in comparison.

Fortunately, freelancers can find help in two directions.

First of all, the Web now means that translators can advertise and find new clients all over the world. Secondly, a freelance translator can contact agencies or brokerage companies and work as a sub-contractor, hopefully on a regular basis. This will save the hassle of prospecting for clients, which most translators are ill-equipped for anyway.

Budding freelance translators are up against a number of major problems:

- They are restricted in the type of work they can take on by their areas of competence and working languages. They cannot take on the lucrative large-scale contracts that usually go to translation agencies or companies, or to well-established and experienced freelancers.
- Because they (sometimes badly) need the income, they cannot afford to pick and choose, and end up taking on short, time-consuming jobs in a lot of different subject areas, requiring as much research as larger contracts but for very little financial reward.
- Working under constant pressure, they have to put productivity at any cost first and quality second, which can only make it harder to get more contracts.
- If they live a long way away from the major urban centres where the translation market is well organised and relatively well-regulated, they may be up against a large number of amateurs and ‘outlaws’ whose only qualification will be to have “*done languages*” and “*spent time in the country*”.
- Having a large number of clients but no major contracts is by no means cost-effective. Not only will the overheads be higher, but each contract may require a different software application, unless of course, they decide to stick to traditional texts and the use of a word processor.

Nor is it easy to find a way round the problems listed above. It is often a choice between (a) offering a more extensive service, including for instance layout and formatting, preparing the translated material for dissemination, formatting for the Internet, desk-top publishing, etc. for the same price, or (b) increasing productivity, working longer hours, or not taking holidays.

The main qualities that a freelancer needs when starting out are dogged determination and nerves of steel. In practice, much will depend on:

- getting support from other translators in the same town or area, with over-worked colleagues passing on contracts and the favour being repaid once the new translator has got her/his own clients;

- being able to discriminate when taking on contracts and not wasting one's talents on menial work – which is more easily said than done when the order book is empty!
- maintaining high quality standards, because – at least in theory – true quality in translation always wins through in the end against the 'outlaws',
- demanding fair payment for the job, because anyone starting off with very low rates will never be able to earn a decent living.

Nowadays, freelance translators can, if they wish, rely entirely on work supplied by translation companies, agencies or brokers, who – depending on the type of company – channel the demand and pass on part or all of it to freelance translators, with brokers acting simply as go-betweens. Freelancers who choose that option must be prepared for periods of slack and idle time until they reach the status of 'preferred partner'.

All in all, freelance translators can enjoy reasonable earnings and satisfaction in their job, with an enviable degree of independence, as long as they can build up a good reputation based on their expertise in a given field (particularly if their field of application is highly specialised), their professionalism and the quality of their translations.

As already stated, many freelance translators are now using recognised corporate business strategies and setting up networks and consortia to share special competences, language combinations and various resources. Some of these networks develop into proper legal entities (*e.g.* limited companies or partnerships), while others are simply based on mutual agreement. All kinds of combinations can be found, as long as they comply with existing laws and regulations, with some translators having their own personal client portfolio on the one hand, and sharing another portfolio with a number of other translators, thus operating under two different legal statuses.

The Internet now allows translators to work with partners all over the world, just as it technically allows a translator somewhere in Transylvania or on Madeira to work for a computer company in Hong Kong or in Silicon Valley.

Networks and partnerships (taken here to mean any kind of association between professionals, on the basis of a common agreement, where each partner retains her or his own clients) offer the following benefits to those involved:

- being able to share out specific functions and tasks (for instance by deciding that one person will be in charge of prospecting for new clients),
- pooling documentation and terminology resources,
- pooling support staff,
- implementing a 'one-stop-shop' (with the same telephone number, fax, Web pages and Web site),

- offering present and future clients a wider range of specialist domains, language combinations, types of equipment and software (CAT software in particular),
- reducing individual investment (for instance by allowing the legal entity to buy new software licences),
- developing new markets,
- increasing the return on investment (more users over a longer period of time),
- giving easy access to proof-readers and revisers (on a reciprocal basis),
- being able to rely on moral and material support from other members of the group or partnership when the going gets rough,
- spreading the workload and achieving greater flexibility,
- offering the work providers even better quality (everyone can chip in with suggestions if one translator is having trouble with a particular term or passage),
- bidding for the more lucrative large contracts that would be beyond the reach of the isolated freelancer but that a group of translators can share out between themselves,
- helping younger translators with advice or material assistance, or by handing over excess workload,
- holding more sway on the market,
- exerting more influence on the way translators are seen by the outside world, on getting rid of bad practice, and on remuneration levels.

Of course, partnerships are not the key to some kind of translator's paradise. There can be tensions and ups and downs, as in any human group. But market pressures are now so strong that it would be foolish not to try at least for a time to work along with fellow freelancers. In any case, all translators have their own network of colleagues to whom they can farm out work which they simply do not have the qualifications for or are unable to complete by the deadline. This means they no longer have to turn down the contracts and risk losing the client once and for all.

A network of independent partners means that the work provider will find the particular competence needed at the right time and in the right place (which is particularly true of transnational networks), with guaranteed quality to boot, because translators, particularly when working in association with others, are particularly keen not to tarnish their own reputation by producing shoddy work.

This type of partnership made possible by the Internet and mostly through mailing lists allows freelance translators to bypass the agencies and brokers if they so wish. Members in different countries can pool the contracts found in their own area, and then claim a commission from the member who actually carries out the job, knowing that the commission will be nothing like the rake-off claimed by an agency or a broker.

There are in fact two sub-types of freelance translators in this respect:

- Those who work mainly for their own clients (*i.e.* with no middleman).
- Those who work mainly for translation agencies or brokers, preferring not to have to prospect for clients or chase after unpaid invoices, for instance.

3.1.2 *Salaried translator?*

Salaried translators are usually people who, for various reasons, are not primarily interested in their independence and who prefer the relative security of a monthly pay packet, or else people who want to gain experience in the profession before starting out on their own. Being a salaried translator also means not having to worry about all the ancillary aspects of the profession such as finding contracts, managing the accounts or maintaining good customer relationships.

Moreover, being employed as a translator means having all the benefits of working in a company environment, *i.e.* help, advice, moral support or even friendship from colleagues, the strength derived from being a member of a group, easy access to documentation, updated IT equipment, software and human resources.

The image that most people in the profession (and particularly freelancers) have of the salaried translator is that of someone who may not earn as much as he could doing freelance work, but who has a relatively ‘cushy’ job. Someone who works regular hours, gets paid leave, has easy access to the relevant sources of information and can ask colleagues in the same room for advice, who can pass anything too difficult on to freelance sub-contractors, who does not have to worry about finding the next contract or about the vagaries of the market, and who has a host of other benefits.

In fact, the main advantage of being a salaried translator is that the employer makes the decisions and takes all the risks, although the translator obviously has to bear some responsibility too.

The pros and cons of being a salaried translator vary according to the type of company, the markets that company works in, the number of staff and the degree of specialisation by function within the company.

For a junior translator, a translation company offers three major opportunities:

- a chance to develop a range of competences, or on the contrary, to specialise in a particular function since most translation companies employ staff in numbers that make it possible for anyone interested to specialise in terminology, or pre-translation, or post-editing, or any other specific task(s) depending on ability, inclination, or choice.
- a chance to gain solid professional experience in a relatively secure environment where the beginner can call on a more experienced translator, ask some-

one to proofread translations, ask for an opinion or advice, use the in-house resources, etc.

- a chance to move into other positions within the firm, *e.g.* sales, project management, customer relations, web mastering, etc. Sales management is a key position in which anyone with a good knowledge of what translation means can work wonders and project management is especially important if – as might be expected – the company goes for the ‘huge’ multi-operator multilingual projects requiring a lot of coordination or if there is significant out-sourcing that requires lots of coordination and guidance.

The opportunities are all the greater when the company is a language service company in the widest sense (which is increasingly the case), offering a whole range of language-related services. These usually include a translation-localisation department, a technical writing department, a document management department, a content management department, a marketing and sales department, an administrative department, an information technology department (where the language engineering products are developed) and an on-line resource-and-help development department. No wonder new recruits are told in such companies that “*there is plenty of scope for initiative*”.

The most efficient translation companies – and those where there are most opportunities for job enrichment – offer translators the opportunity to take full responsibility for projects. This means that they have to do everything a freelancer would do, but without the same degree of risk, *i.e.* prospect for clients, process orders and follow through every stage of the process, draw up estimates, send invoices, recover sums due and a number of other tasks. In a sense, while more and more freelance translators are trying to get some of the benefits of company work by forming partnerships, translation companies are trying to foster more initiative and responsibility in their staff by putting them up front and asking them to manage projects and client portfolios.

At a more basic level, what salaried status can provide is:

- greater job security,
- ‘normal’ working hours,
- state-of-the-art equipment,
- an effective form of supplementary health insurance,
- company ‘perks’,
- more favourable mortgage terms.

All of the above are points actually put forward by students on work placements in translation companies or in-house services when asked to identify their personal career preferences.

3.1.3 *Salaried freelancer?*

Whoever is not ready to take the plunge and go freelance but does not fancy the constraints of working in a company might be tempted, where this is possible, by the umbrella company system, a status which combines the freedom of freelance translation (with the translator finding and managing his own clients) with the full benefits of salaried employment (including no worries over accounts, full health insurance and social security coverage, and paid leave). In that system, in effect, the work provider pays an umbrella company which, in turn, pays the translator as if it were his employer.

3.1.4 *And why not start one's own business?*

Free-market logic dictates that some translators will want to set up their own companies. It is a fact that most translation companies are started by people with other backgrounds than translation (in particular marketing and management), but the number of companies started by *bona fide* translators is by no means negligible. The advice would be: go it as a team and make sure one of the partners has a real inclination and real skills for canvassing for clients, because that is where the secret lies.

3.2 Working as an expat?

Those who feel tempted to seek work abroad, either as freelancers or as salaried translators, often find the experience rewarding. Being a 'native speaker' in a foreign country opens up opportunities, if only because there is less competition. Expatriation is a natural trend among translators, particularly in a global context where transnational companies are developing new branches and agencies in countries offering good market potential and attractive conditions with regard to tax and employers' contributions.

This is yet another instance of 'off-shoring', except that in this case, it is the translator who moves 'off-shore', either to get closer to the potential market for particular skills or language combinations (a translator translating into his native language in a foreign country has a very strong competitive edge over locals who would be translating into their foreign language which, as is well-known, is conducive to lower overall quality) or to find a more favourable tariff/cost of living ratio (especially when the language combination cannot command particularly good rates in the home country).

Nowadays, however, any translator anywhere in the world is a virtual 'expat' whose skills and competences and language combination are available online at any time. Physical expatriation is therefore no longer a pre-requisite for gaining access to markets in other countries. But because a worldwide marketplace often implies adjusting tariffs downwards to remain competitive (with the exception of

a few lucrative ‘niche’ markets) the competitive advantage lies with whoever is physically located in a country which offers the best differential between the tariff that the translator can command for a given language combination and the cost of living. As the tariff levels are set by the market and there are limits to productivity, the only variable that the translator can adjust is the ‘cost of living’ factor. And that may mean going abroad.

4. Starting out

4.1 ‘Setting up shop’ as a freelance translator

As most countries have few or no restrictions to entering the profession, becoming a freelance translator is extremely easy.

4.1.1 *What is needed?*

The easy answer is: a telephone line, some office space – possibly at home – a word processor and a translation memory management system, a printer, a scanner, a modem (for Internet connection and file transfers), a DVD player/engraver, a list of portals and Web sites giving access to technical and specialised dictionaries and, maybe, a list of translation agencies and translation brokers – but that will come easy over the Internet. There is no point in delaying the purchase of a translation memory system since this means feeding in all the translations from the word go and avoiding the necessity of aligning and processing a backlog of translations.

A survey of practising professionals taken on December 7th, 2006 came up with the following recommendations about the kind of equipment, hardware and software anyone should consider getting right from the start:

- A comfortable seat (*ergonomics is the word*)
- A seat on wheels, *for mobility*
- Phone, fax machine, scanner, etc.
- Computer with two screens (*because translators/revisers open many windows simultaneously*)
- Dedicated hard disk drive for backup
- Sound equipment
- Various image/movie viewers
- A digitizer
- A document-shredder
- Software that reads PDF files
- Software for word counts and invoicing
- Spelling and grammar checkers (*the best*)
- An automatic calendar function

- Screen capture software
- As many search engines as possible (*minimum would be Copernic and Google*)
- Powerful search-and-replace software
- An image editor
- A graphics editor
- Optical character recognition software
- Backup Internet access providers
- Quoting and billing software (*of course!*)
- Accounting software (*of course!*)
- One or more spreadsheets
- <http://www.google.com/google-d-s/tour1.html> highly recommended to create and share online glossaries
- A database management software
- A firewall and anti-virus
- Software for file zipping and unzipping
- Full CAT software (translation memory, terminology management, tag editing, aligner) – *each respondent having his or her preferences as to which one*
- Web page editors
- A rates-converting tool
- A terminology-mining tool
- Terminology-management software
- Project-management software
- A personal portal from which to link with useful sites.

However, no one in their right senses would start without previously finding out about the state of the market. Much, in fact, depends on the economic situation: at times, it is relatively easy to set up as a freelance translator because sub-contractors are in demand; at other times business is slack, and not much comes in.

What must be avoided **at all costs** is:

- being dependent on a single client (especially if the client is an agency, unless you are the irreplaceable star),
- believing that clients found through friends and relatives will be there for ever,
- thinking that translation portals or on-line ‘markets’ will supply regular work at comfortable rates,
- basing earnings forecasts on the first twelve months (which can either be excessively prosperous or excessively difficult).

It must also be remembered that, despite what certain employment counsellors may say on the basis of a quick ‘skills profile’, it is extremely unlikely that anyone made redundant from a job which had little to do with translation will manage to turn into a translator overnight. Unfortunately, experience shows that

the ‘counsellors’ involved are often misinformed about what translation as a profession actually entails, and therefore often give misguided advice.

The advice that practising professionals usually give to budding freelance translators is to get together as a partnership with people they know and trust, and thus reap the benefits of combining several language combinations and fields of competence and sharing the cost of the equipment, software and premises. It is very useful, for instance, to have a ‘computer wizard’ on the team if they are going to take an interest in the localisation market, and a *bona fide* ‘sales person’ who will approach the clients. As for the type of setup, translators who have experienced partnership recommend choosing as simple an ‘association agreement’ as possible so that things are less binding legally and therefore easier to disband.

In any case, young freelance translators should aim to specialise as soon as possible (preferably in more than one area), and try to avoid the middlemen by getting their own clients, which, admittedly, is easier said than done.

4.1.2 *How much will it cost?*

Anyone thinking about setting up as a freelance translator needs to work out the initial costs. Of course the actual figures will vary from country to country and according to the type of professional practice envisaged. It is however possible to draw up a list of all the investments needed, which each person can then cost according to their own national and personal context. The list includes all the investments that a translator needs to make in order to meet standard demand and to have a rational set of equipment so as to be in a position to apply for any available start up grants.

Setting up as a translator requires a big investment, especially given that both the equipment and the software will need to be renewed on average every two years or so to keep up with clients’ requirements. A freelance translator has the same imperatives as a translation company in this respect, except that (a) clients are fewer and there is therefore potentially less need for different IT systems and applications, and (b) unlike the translation company, where the burden of the investment can be spread out over the translators and any other operators in the company, the freelancer does not have the benefit of scalability.

Minimum investment requirement

Notes: (a) Translators working for agencies may need quite considerable investment as they will need to use a whole range of software applications and (b) cost calculations should take into account depreciation over whatever period of time taxation laws and regulations allow.

Type of investment	Costs		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Premises (purchased or rented)			
Refurbishment of the premises			
Office furniture			
Reception furniture and fittings (for clients and visitors)			
Multimedia computers			
External memory (for archiving)			
Modem(s)			
DVD players			
Laser printer (colour)			
Telephone			
Fax machine			
Scanner			
Office software pack			
Computer assisted publication software			
Web site creation software and Web editors			
Business software (accounts and other functions)			
Optical recognition software for the scanner			
Voice recognition software – highly advisable			
Terminology (data base) management software			
Translation memory management system(s)			
Localisation software (if relevant)			
Subtitling software and equipment (if relevant)			
Internet connection and firewall			
Antivirus/Firewall, etc.			
Web/FTP server			
Web site (cost of setting up)			
Consumables (estimate)			
Documentation (dictionaries, CD-ROMs, subscriptions)			
Vehicle/transport			
Cash or advances			
Insurance			
Provision for taxes			
Provision for maintenance contracts			
Provision for technical assistance contracts			
Running costs and expenses			
Others			
Miscellaneous			
Miscellaneous assistance and premiums			
Total			

4.1.3 Recommendations

Established translators have the following recommendations for anyone who considers becoming a freelancer:

- Be convinced at all times that translating is a rewarding profession and that translators who are masters of language skills and of technology do make a comfortable living.
- Try to understand what translation requesters actually want; avoid the common error of thinking they are just looking for cheap rates!
- Do not go into freelancing unless you have had an opportunity to actually learn your trade. Start with a period of in-house translating. If that is impossible, get someone with lots of experience to review and revise your translations.
- If you do decide to setup shop as a freelancer, save enough money to live for at least six months without having to accept low-rate contracts.
- Build a two-year business plan and stick to it!!!
- Join a translators' association.
- Subscribe to professional forums.

And, once things get started:

- Never ever refuse an order on the grounds that someone else has promised you a huge project 'next week'. Pending receipt of a true 'solid' purchase order, do take work!
- Never do tests for free unless you know the requester actually means business.
- Pay absolutely no attention to mentions of lower rates by your competitors.
- Never accept deferred payment on the grounds that the agency has not collected the amount of the contract from its client yet.
- In case of alleged quality defects, ask for a list of such defects. Make the necessary corrections if justified.
- Always get some sort of contract. Never undertake a translation in the absence of a purchase order.

4.2 Finding employment as a salaried translator

Today, anyone with a *bona fide* qualification in the field of translation may find work as a salaried translator, providing they abide by the following simple rules:

- * Get a foot in the door. It is estimated that graduates whose course includes a long work placement in a translation company stand at least a one in three chance of being offered a job at the end of that period and that can be three out of four in some courses. This is easy to explain, as the work placement serves to confirm that the intern can carry out the necessary tasks effectively and professionally, and saves the company the expense of going through a full recruitment procedure.

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- * Choose a course that is known to turn out good translators. Companies with vacancies tend to have a bias in favour of applicants who have graduated from institutions whose *alumni* have already proven their professional qualities in the past. It is well-known that graduates from certain institutions have a head start in the employment market, because they are known to have the qualities that the employers are looking for and will be offered the jobs before anyone else.
 - * Apply for all vacancies advertised. However, a word of warning:
 - At least a third of the vacancies advertised are not *bona fide* job ads, but rather cheap publicity for the company pretending to offer vacancies. Some companies or agencies would be employing several hundred in-house translators if they had really taken on all those they had advertised for (unless there is a massive staff turnover, which would be just as bad a sign).
 - Apply for vacancies and go for interviews even if you do not fit the job profile perfectly. If you get through to the interview stage, (1) show them what you can do (2) dwell on your particular skills and expertise, and (3) learn as much as you can about interview techniques: it can come in handy later.
 - * Send your CV. Employers may come across your CV when going through their files prior to recruiting new staff. One particular feature of the translation industry is that a CV mailed to a translation company may also lead to sub-contracting offers when the company needs to farm out work. Many a translator looking for a salaried position has ended up freelancing following this kind of offer.
 - * Use your own networks to the full, including in particular, *alumni* contacts.
 - * Go in for the civil service exams regularly organised by government departments and other public bodies to fill vacancies in their translation services. These exams are widely advertised, but because these are competitive examinations with a large number of applicants, it is advisable to have several years experience, even though this is not officially a pre-requisite.
 - * Apply for jobs that do not actually seem to have been specifically tailored for translators. Many small and medium-sized companies have needs and ‘problems’ on the ‘language’ and ‘documentation’ side that they have no idea how to tackle. They will therefore advertise for jobs without making reference to translators. Once they find out what services translators can actually render, they will hire one. So, go and tell them. And get the job.
 - * Alternatively, many people in small and medium-sized companies do know what a translator can do. But their view of that particular person is a little bit antiquated and they think their problems cannot be solved by hiring a translator. In fact, they would want someone to take care of international

communication, do the translating, write the technical and commercial documentation in English, process the terminology, standardise the terminology, make it available over the intranet, keep watch for economic and technical developments in the company's areas of expertise as they are reported or embedded in Web sites, post information on the company Web site, act as webmaster on the international side, set-up the linguistic training schemes for personnel and find the operators, and so on, and so forth. Which is precisely what the 'modern' translator (that means 'you'!) can offer. So, go and tell them. And land yourself the job.

4.3 Setting up one's own business

Setting up your own translation company is no easy task, and all the institutions involved, the banks in particular, will take it **very seriously indeed**.

The first decision is about the kind of company: will it be a full-blown translation company, an agency or a translation brokerage firm?

If you are considering the first option, these are the common sense rules:

- * Define the purpose of the company (*i.e.* the services you intend to provide).

A translation company may cover any of the services in the following range: translation, technical writing, software adaptation, subtitling, localisation, interpreting, terminology, proof-reading, revision, rewriting, information searches, Web site design and creation, site cloning, Web site hosting, layout design, printing, publishing, dissemination, logo design, trade exhibition representation abroad, correspondence, data entry, document management, overseas travel arrangements, audio or video tape transcripts, industrial property verifications (checking registered trade names), business cards, indexing, on-screen editing, dubbing, slide presentations, tele-marketing campaigns, foreign language tele-marketing, requests for temporary off-shore partners, telephone answering service, foreign language telephone calls, and special-purpose foreign language training, intercultural training and, more widely speaking, anything related to international communication. Defining the widest possible remit is always wise so as to cater for any possible future developments and diversification of the company's business.
- * Define the working languages and any special areas covered (knowing that the latter should be derived from the results of a field study).
- * Conduct a market survey.

No business can be set up without some kind of market survey, and this also applies to translation.

A market survey implies contacting a large number of potential work providers, which is particularly difficult in the area of translation because the market is international rather than purely local or regional, or even national.

The market survey should make it possible to ascertain:

- potential turnover,
- priority fields and domains,
- the resources needed.

As a result of the survey, it should be possible to produce detailed tables showing potential monthly sales figures, broken down by type of service and by domain and/or language. This will serve as the basis for the financial projections. The difficulty lies in the fact that only practising translators have detailed knowledge of current translation demand, and they are usually less than willing to pass on the information to someone who is likely to become a potential competitor.

- * Choose the form of business organization. Basically, in most countries, there is a choice between (1) **sole proprietorship** (2) **partnership** which, in turn, can be a general partnership or a limited partnership and (3) setting up a **company** – usually, a limited liability company.

The choice depends on personal situations and expected market conditions.

There are lots of official sites, in all countries, that explain the pros and cons of the various forms of business organisation. These are quite helpful but no decision whatsoever should be made in this crucial respect without getting **prior legal and tax advice**. This must be seen as a vital investment.

- * Choose a business name. Check that the name is not already being used by another company in the same business, and contact the agency in charge of intellectual property rights in order to pre-empt any future litigation. Decide on the symbols and visuals (logo, headed notepaper, business card, etc.)
- * Work out a commercial policy and strategy.

The commercial policy must help explain how the company will gain a competitive edge over other businesses in the same field. It will also, quite naturally, serve as the basis for future advertising campaigns and materials.

It is often very useful at this stage to mail a flyer to a list of potential clients and to follow it up by phone, to test the reactions and try to get a series of initial business contacts.

It is also recommended to start disseminating the symbols and visuals.

Finally, it is essential to set up a Web site and to start advertising the company's services in order to get potential clients interested.

- * Define tariffs and a billing policy.
The tariffs and billing policy will necessarily affect the company's future cash flow and development potential.
- * Determine the resources required.
Resources include human resources (number of translators, technical writers, etc.), computer hardware and software, and premises. It is essential to get the forecasts right in this area for several reasons:
 - Initial over-equipment and over-investment may jeopardize the very future of the company by landing it with a heavy financial burden from the onset and preventing rapid renewal of equipment (usual turnover being roughly two years).
 - Underestimating the premises required could lead to crippling removal costs (and can mean lost business if clients find it difficult to trace the new location).
 - Overestimating human resource needs means that staff costs will undermine profitability, but any request for business start up grants will have to be accompanied by detailed job creation forecasts.
- * Choose the premises with utmost care.
Need it be said that the choice of premises and their location are all-important, because they reflect on the company's image. Be careful not to underestimate unavoidable costs such as rent, additional charges, local taxes, insurance premiums, energy and fluids, etc. Also be wary that many clients (more especially those that bring in the major contracts) will, soon or late, drop by – even though they may actually do business hundreds or thousands of miles away – and that major clients will be dismayed at the sight of substandard premises.
- * Work out the financial projections.
The financial projections have to be detailed and **realistic**. They will show whether the project is really sustainable and will serve as the basis for applications for grants and financial support. They should show projected income on the one hand and estimated costs and charges on the other.
- * Work out the operating charges.
Operating charges for the first two or three years should include (1) purchases, (2) external services, (3) other external services, (4) taxes, (5) staff costs, (6) financial charges, (7) depreciation.
Here again, there is an abundance of sites dedicated to helping budding managers do the calculations, with special emphasis on not forgetting anything essential. If money is no object, you might also rely on a consultancy firm to work it out for you, the problem being that the information needed to do the calculations accurately is not readily available.

- * Work out how to finance the investment.
The following sources may be used to finance the initial investment:
 - equity capital (subscriber shares) **if applicable**,
 - funds from relatives and friends,
 - government and local authority grants if applicable (start up grants)
 - bank or building society loans.
- * Complete all the legal formalities, including registering the company, in compliance with local or national laws and regulations.

A word of warning

Setting up one's own business requires forward thinking about the four main functions of the business, and how and when the necessary resources will be sought.

The central function of the business will, naturally enough, be **translation-localisation** as this will be the core business. This should be no problem, since it is what the business was set up for in the first place but it must here be remembered that translation-localisation encompasses a variety of activities and skills and may therefore require differentiated resources.

But that central function will not be viable unless it is quite clear to anyone concerned that no production will take place and no revenue will be generated unless contracts are found so that the 'products' can be sold. The **sales** function is therefore as essential as the translating function, and this requires trained staff.

If the company starts to sell more than it can produce under its own steam, it will have to contract the work out to others. This means planning from the start how sub-contracting will be organised and managed, *i.e.* how project management will be organised, how the translators will be recruited, how the necessary resources will be obtained, how the terminology bases will be generated and managed. It means defining quality assurance protocols, job specifications and work plans, drawing up contractual agreements, training the necessary staff, ensuring quality control, etc. **Outsourcing management** is therefore the third major function that needs planning for.

The fourth and final function covers all the **administrative work, bookkeeping and accountancy and resource management**. It will be necessary to have the required skills in-house, unless it is clear from the word go that this will be outsourced, which is possible, but may turn out to be costly.

Failure to plan for any one of the four functions means that the production side of the business (*i.e.* translating-localising) will gradually take over and prevent any further development on the sales side. It is a difficult balance to strike, especially when the business is still struggling to find its feet, but things will

be made easier if everyone is fully aware of the dangers involved because most business collapses in the early stages are due to nothing but sheer ignorance of the pitfalls on the part of hard-driving entrepreneurs who fail to confront their enthusiasm with harsh economic reality.

CHAPTER 7

Here we go!

Finding (and holding on to) clients

Introduction

For both the freelance translator and the pre-sales staff in a translation company (who increasingly come from the ranks of the translators and have had special training on the business side), finding new contracts is the key to survival.

1. Strategies

The following strategies can be recommended to anyone starting out as a freelance translator:

- contact as many translation agencies or companies as possible and say you are available for work.
Simply typing in '*translation + agency*' in a search engine comes up with literally tens of thousands of translation company and agency Web sites, all of whom are, in some way or other, looking for translators. Sites that advertise '*translators wanted*' should be avoided as those are usually on the look out for translators willing to work for free.
Looking for contracts on the Internet can also be a way of picking up all kinds of useful and vital information and anyone hoping to work as a translator would be well advised to spend time trawling the Web for resources, as part of their own professional 'education'.
- leave your CV on professional translation Web sites and portals and translators' or translation exchanges. That is quite easy and one never knows, after all.
- keep an eye (or an RSS thread) on Internet translation auction sites and calls for tenders;
- set up your own Web site and have it referenced by the main search engines to make sure that those 'identify' your site, so that anyone looking for a translator will see it come up in the first pages of 'hits'. If in doubt on referencing, get help from a professional webmaster, who knows the trick;

- activate all your contacts with close or distant family, family friends, former football team mates, etc. This is often the first thing translators will do as a matter of course, but they must bear in mind that these contacts will begin to wear thin after the first few months, although any single contact can lead on to greater things;
- get your name down in the yellow pages as a matter of urgency (over half the people in need of translation say they found their translator in the good old phone book or Web equivalent);
- contact professional organisations in the field of translation;
- get your name down in any professional directory, just in case;
- get your local newspaper to publish a short article on the new service you are offering;
- better still, find a way of having the local TV interested in the ‘new’ translator on the local scene and insist on whatever difference would single you out as ‘best value for money’;
- use all the classic marketing techniques (telephone calls, mailing lists, etc.);
- contact professional organisations in the domain areas that you want to specialise in;
- leave your business brochure and card with the local Chamber of Commerce and any other such institution;
- contact translation companies and agencies and say you are ready to sub-contract for them;
- contact all the companies in the local business park, or anywhere where there are a lot of businesses concentrated in the same area;
- advertise in professional journals and magazines, targeting possible translation requesters in your special fields of competence;
- contact any organisation that can give you access to potential clients; *e.g.* tourist offices, business clubs, business centres, various professional associations, science parks.
- go to trade exhibitions (but tread carefully): trade exhibitions are a difficult area, because organisers usually don’t look too kindly on ‘hangers on’ who are not paying their way and do not in any way help fund or promote the event. The sole purpose of a visit to this kind of event should be to get the names of translation managers or purchasers in the participating companies or organisations because that is the vital information. You can then send a letter or e-mail directly to that ‘prospect’, referring to the person you met on the stand. This is usually far more effective than simply sending out a ‘blind’ circular letter.
- read the specialist press and keep an eye open for new opportunities: if, for instance, a company has recently signed a big export deal, it will necessarily have new translation needs both ways. Anticipating on translation needs is

always better than just hoping to be hired or called by people who already have stuff translated; it is much like looking up for clever investments on the Stock Exchange and finding out the promising start-ups.

- contact fellow translators in the area (because they may one day have work for you, and because it always helps to be sociable, in any case);
- use your imagination (but don't go over the top!). You might, for instance, create your own blog with lots of information on translation, translating, and anything that might attract people who have problems finding translators, do not know what the stakes of globalisation-internationalisation-localisation are and what can be done about that, or might be looking for dictionaries or anything related to translation. The point there is using the right keywords to attract readers in the hope they will turn out to become customers.
- aim for the most lucrative markets from the start: you never know, you might strike it lucky.

The crux of the matter is not just to get clients but to build up a portfolio of **worthwhile** clients. A freelance translator needs to consider each client in terms not only of turnover, but in terms of real profit. There is no point in generating huge turnover if the actual hourly return is tiny or mediocre. Each client should therefore be seen as a profit centre, with real potential for development in the medium-term. Direct clients generally have better potential in this respect because there is no middleman. However, indirect clients can also turn out to be good prospects if the middlemen (the agencies or translation companies) do take on some of the most time-consuming and least profitable tasks – in terms of costs incurred by the subcontracting freelancer though not in absolute terms – by providing a fully prepared translation so the translator can concentrate on translating.

And, as we said earlier, the crucial problem for the translator looking for contracts remains, in any case, how to find the key contact person in the targeted company: *i.e.* the person who is aware of the translation needs, who knows what translation entails and who can have a say in the matter (purchasing departments, for their part, will only be interested in the cost, the real cost and the amount invoiced). Translators will need all the insider support they can get from the contact person if things like quality and deadlines are to be taken into account.

Of course, in order to attract worthwhile customers, translators must offer some competitive advantage. This is why they should try to specialise as soon as possible in a given domain or area of competence which they have been able to identify through a serious market study. Beginners often experience difficulties in finding clients, precisely because they can rely on none of the clinching factors such as domain specialisation, reputation, or experience. This is why many choose to play it safe by doing sub-contracting work for translation companies or agencies

while spending a lot of time and energy trying to build up their own customer base in the 'niche' areas where they hope they will be able to specialise and make money.

Company or agency work can prove an interesting experience for the beginner, even though the money will not be as good as in freelancing (supposing that option worked well from the first day). Agency translators, for instance, find comfort in the fact that the agency looks after the commercial and management sides of the contract, interfaces regularly with the work provider (theoretically at least) and, last but not least, should, again at least in theory, bear the financial risk if the client defaults on his payment and take responsibility for recovering any sums due. The problem today is that, in the wake of emerging standards, agencies try and shift responsibility onto their subcontractors (while still calling them 'partners').

A good rule of thumb is that the normal pattern for freelancers is to aim to cut down their reliance on agency work from 50% the first year, to around 20% by the third year, although some are quite happy to keep on getting most and even all of their work from various agencies or brokers.

1.1 Set simple rules and never depart from them

On the basis of opinions canvassed from a number of long-established freelance translators, beginners would be well advised to stick to two fundamental rules:

1. Never deliberately reduce an estimate to pull off a contract, because once you do that, it becomes well nigh impossible to charge the normal rate for subsequent work.
2. Never sell yourself short in desperation for work: difficult as the decision may be, the time spent on a cheap translation would be better spent looking for more lucrative work.

The beginner should also heed the following words of warning:

- do not get too big for your boots: do not try to compete with other translators in market segments that require specialist knowledge and experience you do not actually have,
- have no qualms whatsoever about forsaking contracts which are not financially profitable or professionally rewarding,
- do not accept one-page one-time jobs unless you can impose a significant flat charge for 'administrative' expenses,
- do not deal separately with a string of one or two-page translations from the same client: have a subscription system for regular customers.

1.2 Rely on word of mouth

A substantial share (*i.e.* over a third) of the work that comes the average translator's way is based on reputation and word of mouth. Words of praise from a satisfied client will rapidly help to enhance a translator's reputation and have a snowball effect. Of course, the reverse is also true: a dissatisfied customer will be only too happy to spread the word about a translator's shoddy work or unprofessional behaviour among business acquaintances.

1.3 Head for the right tier of the market

Translators should always remember that each translation market has four broad 'layers': (a) general, run-of-the-mill translations; (b) semi-specialised translations; (c) specialised translations and (d) highly specialised translations.

- **General translation** includes documents which are not strongly identified with a particular domain, type or purpose. This type of translation attracts all kinds of amateurs and outlaws, who feel they are able to "*tackle that kind of thing*" without any particular training or knowledge in the area. Most professional translators are happy to leave them to it, because, barring a few exceptions, this kind of work is generally badly paid and does nothing for their reputation.
- **Semi-specialised translation** includes documents that require a minimum amount of knowledge in the subject area or field of competence concerned. This restricts the number of potential translators, although you may still find a number of people ready to 'have a go' simply because they happen to have managed to get hold of the 'right' dictionary.
- **Specialised translation** covers documents that require a good knowledge of the subject area and/or a perfect knowledge of the rules and conventions that apply to the particular type of translation to be carried out. It should normally only be approached by practising professional translators, but the off amateur can still be found, armed again with the ubiquitous 'right dictionary' or labouring under the delusion that the Web will provide absolutely all the answers.
- **Highly specialised (and high-tech) translation:** here the degree of specialisation required (both in terms of mastery of relevant communication skills and in terms of knowledge of the leading edge technology and procedures involved) restricts the field to a handful of very experienced translators: the top guns.

In any case, when the translation is critical – for whatever reason – specialist knowledge is of the essence. This means that only a translator with the required

knowledge should be called on to do the translation **and** that a domain specialist with sufficient linguistic abilities should check it and, if need be, suggests changes.

As a rule, a **qualified** translator (not necessarily yet an experienced one) should:

- never stoop to scrambling after the crumbs (*i.e.* the small time jobs) unless they are highly lucrative;
- initially aim at least for the semi-specialised translation market;
- move into specialised translation as soon and as fast as possible.

With a few notable exceptions, translators in the initial stages of their career should not attempt highly specialised translation right away, unless they are simply requested to produce a first draft that will be subsequently revised by a more experienced translator, or a gist translation. Only when they have gained the necessary expertise and experience in a particular area should they take on such work single-handed.

There are actually two ways of accessing the more specialised tier of the market. The first one is passive; the other active. The passive way consists in just waiting for the opportunity to surface among existing clients. The active one consists in actually acquiring specialist knowledge and skills (taught or self-taught) in one of the most lucrative areas of translation and localisation while going about the business of making a living with ‘ordinary’ translations until the times are ripe to hunt for new grounds.

1.4 Beware of pipe dreams!

The budding translator is unlikely to land a lucrative procurement contract with the Ministry of Defence or any other Government agency or department that will guarantee a regular income for the next ten years. Such contracts can only be won by highly professional contractors.

1.5 Beware the kiss of death!

As we have already pointed out, translators should be very careful to keep a balanced client portfolio. Even though having just one client may seem attractive in that it saves time on prospecting, it can also be extremely dangerous if things suddenly begin to go wrong. The same warning applies, to a large extent, to excessive *domain* specialisation; especially if the latter is very, very, narrow. It must repeatedly be made clear that highly specialised translation markets do collapse and, when they do, the specialist translators concerned can in no way hope to command the same kind of money they used to get. They may even have a hard job getting contracts relating to other domains.

Translators should always make sure that they are not tied to their clients: having a balanced portfolio means they remain free to stand up to clients who suddenly demand lower prices or unreasonable deadlines or want to impose unacceptable conditions.

2. 'Sell' high quality translation

Good translations cost money – as everyone knows. So, selling translation, particularly 'high quality' translation is often difficult, but the following arguments can be useful:

- the translated document will be a showcase for the client's business abroad;
- the translated document is the company's or the organisation's ambassador abroad;
- high quality translation is an effective commercial weapon, or at least, a major asset in the marketplace;
- high quality translation is a token of respect towards one's foreign business partners;
- high quality translation is a sign of concern and professionalism on the part of the person who commissioned the translation;
- high quality translation reduces the risk of litigation.

In fact, the arguments are more convincing if you reverse the perspective. Most clients or potential clients will not be very impressed by arguments in favour of 'good' translation (simply because that is what they expect to be getting in any case) but might easily be convinced that 'poor' translations are quite damaging if told that:

- poor quality translations can damage the company's image abroad;
- a badly translated document reflects badly on the business or organisation it emanates from;
- translation is not an end in itself, but a means to an end (to help sell a product, develop new products, implement a commercial strategy, find new clients, develop a business, etc.) If the translation is of poor quality, it will simply not work and fulfil the desired functions;
- poor quality translation is a backfiring commercial weapon;
- sending someone a poor quality translation amounts to lack of respect for the person or persons on the receiving end;
- mediocre translation is a sign of lack of concern and professionalism on the part of the person disseminating it, even though that person may be in no way responsible for the quality of the translation itself;

- poor translations cause aggravation, frustration and resentment, are a waste of time and money, can be a hazard for people and property and are therefore potentially a source of endless litigation.

An easy way of convincing a potential client that quality is important is to show him a poor translation in his own language or a language he knows well. If he finds it hilarious or astounding, or both, just point out that his own clients abroad would react exactly in the same way to any poor translation he would happen to have commissioned and have done on the cheap by some smart operator.

Don't despair if this doesn't work. Here are the two clinching arguments:

- The cost (or the additional cost) of high quality translation is nothing compared to the real (but very often hidden) cost of damage done by a poor translation.
- Whenever the translation costs are calculated the way they should, *i.e.* as part of the overall cost of a project or operation, they appear for what they are: a mere fraction of the total development, production, and marketing cost for the product or process concerned.

3. Learn how to talk about quality

A client who finds that quality translation is “*far too expensive*” and argues that he is only willing to “*pay so much and not a penny more*”, is very much like the man who went to a car show-room, and asked to see the top of the range model: “*the one with an 8-cylinder engine, ABS, thief-proof ‘smart key’ ignition, etched windows, air-conditioning, tinted glass, leather seats (heated, of course; adjustable both ways, naturally) voice control, on-board navigation system, etc.*”

The car salesman congratulated him on his choice. What he wanted was really the ultimate in motoring, a magnificent piece of engineering, just perfect for the man of class, and, “*reasonable at the price to boot, considering what you get for your money. A ridiculous xx,xxx euros*”

On hearing the price tag, the customer blanched, but quickly regained his composure and endeavoured to knock down the price. He was a regular customer there, and surely that warranted a (large) discount as a gesture of goodwill. Of course, he could not be seen driving anything less than top-of-the-range, but honestly, the price was a bit over the top, to say the least, especially when you added on all the taxes, VAT, maintenance costs and the rest of it. . .

The salesman commiserated. Times were hard indeed. For everyone (including himself). So, yes, he would be willing to make a gesture. But, for his money, the client would have to do without the air-conditioning and leather seats. And make do with standard disk brakes, spring suspension, and a (much) smaller engine. In fact, it might be better to opt for a different model altogether: “*Something*

just right for your price bracket, a good solid family car with a 1.2 litre engine. Not really for the rally driver of course, but very cheap to run. And in case you still find it a bit outside your price range, well, I'm sure we can come to an agreement. And if you can do without the spare wheel, we can bring it down to...

"Hang on sir; you're not leaving already are you?"

4. Offer a wide range of products and prices

One way of avoiding the recurring debate over the cost and quality of translation is to do just what tradesmen and craftsmen do and offer clients a range of 'products' at different prices. Optional extras can also be advertised. The following table gives an idea of how translators could offer services ranging from a basic 'no frills' service to 'top of the range' translation.

Type of product	Option 1	Option 2	Tariff
Gist/synoptic translation	1. written	'As is'/not proof-read	—
		Proof-read	—
	2. spoken/recorded	'As is'	—
		Proof-read/checked	—
'No frills' translation ⁶	1. written	'As is'	—
		Proof-read	—
		Revised ⁷	—
		Passed for use ⁸	—
	2. spoken/recorded	'As is'	—
		Proof-read/checked	—
		Revised	—
		Passed for use	—
'Absolute' translation ⁹	1. written	Proof-read	—
		Revised	—
		Passed for use	—
	2. spoken/recorded	Proof-read/checked	—
		Revised	—
		Passed for use	—

6. A type of translation which conveys all the information but without necessarily complying with the phraseology, style or specific writing features of the original.

7. Free of any error, omission or defect.

8. Subjected to a functional test (*i.e.* to check that the translated material 'works' just as well as the original under identical conditions).

9. A translation which complies with the typology, style and the specific writing features of the original.

The client should be handed a detailed description of each of the types listed above so that he knows perfectly well what to expect. Any client wanting a particular type of translation should sign an agreement clearly stating the nature and extent of the service provided, for fear he might be tempted by the lower rate then, on receiving the translation, hasten to complain that the end-product is not up to standard – quickly forgetting that a rough translation rather than a more polished version had been agreed on.

It could of course be argued that some of the types of translation listed above do not really require a professional translator at all and that a machine translation system or “*anyone*” (that ubiquitous character, usually well-known for producing unlimited amounts of “*garbage*”) could do the job just as well. But this is not sufficient reason to give up what actually is a particular section of the translation market and is often but a first step leading to subsequent requests for more elaborate and more comprehensive translations.

The basic question is one of cost-effectiveness, both for the work provider and for the translator. Why should the work provider not be entitled to ask for gisting or ‘part translation’ if that is all that is needed – and getting real value for his money since the translator can do intelligent gisting and actually offer more than expected. Translators should know that things are changing and ponder the case of that business manager who **just** wanted to know what technological innovations were mentioned in a particular Web site. The translator he approached to do the job provided the information from the site in question and went on, quite naturally, to explore other relevant Web sites in English, German and Spanish, thus providing the client with a comprehensive overview of the subject. The translator immediately landed a highly lucrative contract for regular technology intelligence summaries and updates for the same client. The partnership is going stronger than ever.

SECTION IV

Being a translator

Current (permanent) issues

Of time and money

Rates, productivity, quality and deadlines

Introduction

The translator's problems are all more or less connected with the time-to-market factor. The problem can be stated quite unequivocally: all things being equal, any given quality level requires a given budget that translates into a 'time allowance' and determines deadlines. Time, as we all know, is money; and shortage of money immediately translates into shortage of time and/or downgraded quality.

The fact is, bluntly, that according to a personal survey of 40 translation companies and twice as many freelancers in 11 European countries plus Morocco, (a) tariffs have fallen 20 to 40% on average in real terms over the past ten years – though income has not fallen to the same extent, as productivity gains from IT tools have compensated to a certain degree – (b) deadlines are becoming ever tighter, and (c) processing the 'new types of materials' tends to take more and more time. Short of working longer hours for less money, translators have no choice but to hunt for productivity gains.

In fact, few translators have taken full advantage of the technological advances of the last decade. All too often, they have simply offered extended service without charging extra. The most telling example is that of laser printouts and desktop publishing, which translators started offering free of charge when the relevant technologies became readily available. And anyway, technological advances often adversely affect the translator's income as is the case with translation memories, for instance, since work providers are reluctant to pay anew for '*what has already been translated*'.

One false good idea to get a competitive edge is not to charge for part of the service – the client being all too happy to take advantage of the 'free gift' – a practice by no means restricted to translators who are desperately short of work. When it comes to tariff levels, translators all too often appear to be willing to dig their own graves. Whenever a new type of service appears on the market, everyone rushes to take over the new 'niche', adding the 'specialism' in question to their list of skills on offer, thus automatically undercutting the market value of the said skill. Localisation is a case in point: nowadays, all translators appear to be prepared to

offer ‘localisation’ services as a matter of course. In fact, **true** ‘localisation’ involves highly specialised and complex technical processes going far beyond translating the text (or script) part of things. It is therefore normally subject to special rates (given, in particular, that the skills involved are not that readily available on the market as yet). Once everyone, or nearly everyone, has started to offer ‘localisation’ services or to label traditional services as ‘localisation’, the truly specialised nature of true localisation is lost from view and tariffs begin to fall, especially if and when the work providers realise that they are getting basically the same service dressed up under a ‘trendy’ name. *Bona fide* localisation is consequently devalued and, by a knock-on effect, ‘standard’ translation is also devalued simply because the differential with the supposedly ‘top-of-the-range’ service has to be maintained.

In this less than favourable context, the efforts being made by many translators to maintain standards and tariffs are all the more noteworthy: they try to uphold the value of the services they offer by refusing to work for less than what they believe to be acceptable rates. And there are also *bona fide* translation companies which have fought to maintain realistic tariff levels and managed to convince their work providers that they are getting mighty good value for their money, but this is an ongoing battle, and the nature of the challenge must be made clear to all concerned.

1. Making a living out of translation

In order to translate happily away, translators have to be able to ‘make a living’ out of translation as a profession, either as salaried translators or as freelance translators.

1.1 Salaried translators

Salaried translators do not have to worry about finding job contracts, but they are more and more frequently expected to become involved in the financial and accounting aspects of their work and, more generally, in the intricacies and complexities of management:

- by taking end-to-end responsibility for complex processes and services;
- by managing a portfolio of clients from A to Z, *i.e.* taking the commercial contacts, providing the services and follow-up;
- by receiving commission on the turnover generated by their client portfolio;
- *via* quality and productivity bonuses.

1.2 Freelance translators

The major problem for freelance translators is originally to find clients and, once they have built up their client portfolio, to keep enough breathing space between contracts, in other words, to earn a '*decent rate*' for each job. Based on the translator's productivity, it is easy to reckon how much he must earn to be able to do the job according to applicable quality requirements. Below that amount, the translator will either compromise on quality or sustain quality and be working at least partly for free for the work provider – which generally means working nights and on Sundays and cutting down on holidays.

2. Managing wages and rates

Although it may be comforting to find that there are still clients (and even some agencies) who refuse to farm out work to translators with ridiculously low rates, on the grounds that quality has a price, translators' remuneration levels are threatened by:

- the fact that work providers are aware of any productivity gains being made by translators and claim their (lion's) share,
- growing competition from translators working in low-cost countries, either because (a) clients will get cheaper translations in those countries or (b) translators from low-income countries desert their national markets to join the competition in higher-income countries and on the international market – if there is such a thing – and get higher rates, but without charging the full rates that 'local' translators have to charge.
- competition from colleagues in the same countries who are inclined to lower their rates because they think market pressure makes this a necessity for 'survival'. Whenever increased market pressure begins to be felt, work providers find translators spontaneously offering rebates and tariff reductions. Whatever the reasons, this kind of gesture helps fuel the downward spiral by giving clients the impression that translators have been raking off a comfortable profit margin all along and that there is plenty of room for rebates.
- unfair competition from 'outlaw' operators,
- growing reluctance on the part of translation work providers to pay the '*right rate*' for the job – everyone apparently being bent on paying as little as possible for as much as possible.

2.1 Bases for calculation

The basis for calculating translation costs and rates can vary according to a number of factors. For the most part, the calculation is based on counts inherited from the days of the printing industry, including:

- number of words,
- number of signs,
- number of standard or ‘real’ pages (as opposed to ‘physical pages’, which may not be full pages) on the basis of 250 or 300 words per page – which amounts *in fine* to a rate per word,

The standard implicitly adopted by the English and American translation industry is 250 words per page (25 × 6.5 inch lines, with double spacing, and pica 10 font), a throwback to the printing and typing era. Differences usually stem from variations in line length, which may depend on paper format and standard margin definitions.

- number of standard lines based on 60 characters per line – the standard reference in Belgium, for instance,
- number of standard sheets (25 lines of 60 characters each, *i.e.* 1500 signs – the standard reference in the publishing industry – or 30 lines of 60 characters each, *i.e.* 1800 signs).

However, the count may also be based on such items as:

- subtitles,
- menu lines,
- lines of code,
- minutes of dialogue – unless the calculation is based on a transcript and therefore on the number of words,
- reels,
- items (translation of legends, tables, lists, etc.),
- bits (used in software localisation).

And there also people who count by job, hours or days.

Standards may vary from one country and from one sector of the industry to another (for instance, technical translation and literary translation use very different standards) and tariffs are often open to discussion and negotiation.

One method of calculation is based on source material volume, irrespective of the source language: the number of items (whatever the basis for the count) is multiplied by the flat rate per item. This is referred to as ‘source unit’ calculation. It makes it easier for the work provider to know where he stands.

Another method known as ‘target unit’ calculation consists in basing the calculation on translated volume, irrespective of language. Translators using this

method argue that it allows the ‘expansion ratio’ (*i.e.* the difference in the number of words between the target and the source text) to be taken into account.

Expansion is inevitable when working from a ‘synthetic’ language into an ‘analytical’ language, the typical example being from German into French or English, where the translation usually shows a 25 to 30% increase in the number of words. However, serious research has shown that the phenomenon is not always as ‘inevitable’ as is made out and can vary according to the translator’s professional capacity. Interestingly enough, no one ever mentions the converse ‘contraction ratio’ that should logically apply in translations from French or English into German.

Work providers are of course usually worried that calculating on a ‘target unit’ basis may encourage translators to deliberately spin out their translation as much as possible. So, the best method is to agree on a *pro rata* calculation applied to the source word count. It is interesting to note that, in the good old days of the seventies and eighties, the translator would carefully tot up the number of words in the source document, then add 10% to take into account various idiosyncrasies and also, the typing effort required.

Today, there is no need any more to apply the age-old method of multiplying the average number of words per line by the average number of lines per page, then multiplying the result by the number of pages. There exists no end of word counting functions or software packages (For whatever the anecdote is worth, the first semi-automatic ‘word counter’ appears to have been invented back in 1979 at the then ‘Translation Bureau’ in Ottawa). The problem is that you may get as many results as there are word counters, which then leads to a discussion on the merits of this or that application, from the translator’s or the client’s point of view. Some publishers have even tried to leave blanks and spaces out of counts based on the number of ‘signs’ per page, leaving no alternative for the translator confronted with this situation but to hand in a translation with no blanks or spaces in order to drive home the sheer stupidity of the idea!

2.2 Invoicing modes

Translators have to comply with what clients expect. If clients are used to being charged on a word count basis, it will be very difficult to persuade them to accept any other mode of rate-setting. On the other hand, translators dealing with ‘new’ clients (or with long-standing clients who are willing to change) should try charging on an hourly or *per diem* basis (with leeway for negotiation). The translator can, for example, make an estimate of the time required for the translation depending on the type of material to be translated, the tools used, the volume reused from previous translations, etc. Applying the corresponding

hourly rate will provide a reasonable estimate, to be adjusted according to the time actually spent on the job.

With this kind of calculation, both the translator and the client would get a 'fair deal'. The translator works out a basic rate according to his productivity. The greater the productivity, the higher the rate, but in the end, the work provider will get a good deal because he will get the job done. At the same time, the work provider may reduce costs by contributing input for the translation, *i.e.* by providing information on the subject, briefing or even training the translator, providing terminology and phraseology resources or even undertaking to carry out some of the operations (as, for example, deciding to have someone on his staff carry out the technical quality control).

Another way of calculating fees would be as follows:

1. levy a minimum flat rate service charge for any translation, irrespective of length, except in the case of special rates for regular clients who pay a monthly or quarterly set amount,
2. work out cost on the basis of specific rates for all the different operations or tasks in the overall translation process (documentation, terminography, quality checks, layout, etc.) This highlights the different tasks involved and means they are clearly billed for what they represent in the overall translation process.
3. count as additional work, at market rates, any task undertaken **over and above** those related to the translation process proper (*e.g.* creating a glossary, correcting the source material, having another translator proof-read the translation, aligning texts and translations, setting up a translation memory, making laser print-outs),
4. apply discounts for redundancy or repetition while still charging a minimum amount for repeated segments.

This method can serve as a basic framework for quotes and then be adapted for use for those clients who setup a subscription scheme or by introducing any special rates which the translator may wish to apply to particular types of clients.

From the translator's point of view, the most rational approach would appear to be to work out the estimated cost of a translation on the basis of an hourly or daily rate applied to the total estimated time for a given job, including – if applicable – pre-translation and post-translation tasks. This implies, of course, that the translator is capable of forecasting how long the job will take, and not simply recording how long it has taken to complete. In other words, the translator has to be able to identify cost centres and work out average times for each type of task, which will then be invoiced separately, with each cost item including labour and use of various resources (equipment, software, documentation, etc.). This would include, for instance:

- a flat service charge for each translation job accepted,
- a handling charge for such as additional back-up copies, photocopying, digitizing, printing, etc.
- as the case may be, the cost of upgrading the source material,
- documentation costs,
- terminology costs – given that the terminology ultimately belongs to the work provider, who pays for it,
- time spent on interviewing information providers,
- translation costs, to which might be added the cost of creating or updating a translation memory,
- checking, proof-reading and/or revision costs,
- quality control and qualifying tests,

This kind of approach could be valuable in educating the work provider: breaking the process down into separate tasks clearly highlights its complexity and underlines the fact that each task has a definite cost within the overall total. Its main advantage is that it also **most clearly identifies** the intellectual property rights assigned to each operator according to the tasks performed and paid for. That being said, translators may prefer to conceal the details and charge a total amount for the service performed, on the basis of average times and costs for each item. Some translators even consider that they “*work so fast that it would give an unfair advantage to the client if they didn’t charge on a per-word basis*”.

2.3 Rates and remuneration

As regards salaried translators, salary scales are generally similar to those applied in skilled or highly-skilled non-manual jobs, but may vary considerably according to a number of factors, including:

- the employer’s status – remuneration rates are generally higher in the public sector than with private employers,
- the size of the translation department: as a rule, the larger the department, the higher the rates,
- the employer’s wages policy,
- regional location: in most countries, salaries can be significantly higher in the capital area and in and around major cities and industrial or service centres,
- the degree of responsibility (from top to bottom: project manager, reviser – especially at the post-editing stage - translator and terminologist, practically on an equal footing, and finally, proof-reader),
- special skills, particularly those related to sophisticated IT tools such as relatively rare software platforms, or complex computer-assisted translation tools,

- specialisms: multimedia translation and software localisation can command significantly higher rates,
- (marginally) professional competence.

Equally spectacular variations can be found in the rates applied by freelance translators. The following factors may account for the variations:

- Translation rates may vary ‘naturally’ by a ratio of 10 to 1 according to the type of source material, the technical nature of the tasks involved, and the relationship between translators and their clients.
- Rates are usually higher when translators deal directly with their client than when they do sub-contracted work for a translation company or agency, simply because of the agency’s commission. In fact, the translator may be paid 50% less when acting as a subcontractor to an agency than when dealing directly with the client.
- The rates applied by translation companies are generally much higher than those applied by freelancers, due to the significantly higher costs and overheads that the former have to bear.
- Rates and remunerations vary considerably from one country to the next. For instance, translation rates are higher in Germany than in France, in France than in the United Kingdom or in Spain, in Britain than in Ireland, in Ireland than in Italy, in Italy than in Argentina, and higher in Argentina than in Cambodia or in a number of other countries. This is why translation is a notoriously footloose activity: a significant percentage of translations from English into other European languages in the field of information technology used to be carried out by companies and agencies based in the Republic of Ireland. But the cost of living has risen in Ireland and so has the cost of translating. So the situation has shifted quite dramatically over the past couple of years and Hungary, Slovakia and now Bangalore have superseded Ireland. And the chances are they will in turn be superseded by some cheaper operator.

Three major sources can supply information about going rates in a given geographical area or for a given type of translation:

- The tariff indicators which professional associations regularly publish and update on the basis of information volunteered or supplied by their members. When they exist, these rapidly become standard benchmarks for the profession. The Italian Association of Translators and Interpreters (AITI) publish actual going rates. In France, the *Société Française des Traducteurs* provides ‘tariff ranges based on actual rates, as supplied by our members’. To know about professional associations in any given country, get to the International Federation of Translators site at www.fit-ift.org/en/news-en.php and find the links to the target member association (members are grouped by continent). Note,

however, that publication of rates is not allowed in the U.S. since it amounts to ‘price fixing’ and that publishing rates is not necessarily a good idea since this can give work providers a basis for comparisons and indicate where the bottom line is.

- Subscribers to dedicated mailing lists and forums (and portals) used by the translation profession – which generally provide data from a large variety of countries, as subscribers may be based anywhere in the world. For access, ask your navigator to return information for queries such as ‘*translators*’ + ‘*mailing lists*’: there are plenty of sites and portals.
- Freelance translators’ or translation companies’ Web sites. Query should be *translation + price* and can then be refined by country or language or type. This may prove a disheartening experience as all navigators will inevitably return answers with sometimes unbelievably low rates from some countries.

Note: Anyone wishing to use mailing lists as a source of information on going translation rates should abide by a few simple rules:

- Once you have subscribed to the list, start by searching the archives: the information you are looking for is necessarily in there because all such lists devote a lot of room to the rates issue.
- Avoid sparking off yet another discussion on the subject by sending a question to the entire forum: identify one of the most authoritative ‘voices’ on the list and send that person a private e-mail.

As to how much money translators make, no one but the translators themselves (and possibly internal revenue officers) know. In fact, there are huge variations depending on the country, the market, the specialisms, and the time spent translating – obviously, unless their tariffs differ widely, someone working part-time will normally earn less than someone working full time. As a rule, specialised translators can charge higher rates than generalist translators and ‘localisers’ or ‘media translators’ earn more than translators. But those who can command the highest wages or rates are the ‘niche’ translators – especially in such fields as finance, advertising, marketing, and the cosmetics industry.

Just to illustrate the discrepancies, we will mention a survey conducted in the mid-90s by a well-known French magazine, which listed ‘*translators*’ among those professionals earning more than € 150,000 a year at a time when, in the same country, an overwhelming majority of translators were grossing under € 20,000 a year. After all, making € 150,000 a year only implies translating 450,000 words (1,500 pages) at € 0.33 per word – which is not at all an insane proposition for top-of-the-range specialists.

Once the basic rate has been determined, additional problems will need to be addressed:

- What rate should apply to segments which have already been translated? To what extent should they be charged for a second time, and at what rate?
The rate for importing pre-translated fully matching segments is usually at least 50% of the standard rate and, in the case of ‘fuzzy’ or part matches, it is up to the translator to try and negotiate the best possible rate, generally thought to be at least 80% of the standard rate.
- How should ‘non-text’ items be dealt with? Should they be counted separately at a set rate? If so, what rate should be applied, etc.?
- What are the sound justifications for rebates: volume? Frequency of contracts? Contributions by the work provider? Availability of translation memories and/or terminology?
- What are the sound justifications for charging extra: urgency and emergency? Language? Directionality of translation? Complexity? Special requirements in terms of hardware, skills, software, checks, testing, etc.?

3. Earning more

Like anyone else, translators may wish to increase their earnings. There are basically four ways for them to achieve this:

- a) specialise, preferably in one or more ‘niche’ sectors of the market, and
- b) increase their productivity;
- c) be choosy about clients;
- d) apply regular rate increases.

3.1 Specialising or moving into a niche market

As we have already mentioned, a translator’s potential income is directly related to the number of competent translators available to do the job. If the translator’s skills and competences (in terms of domain, type of medium, skills level, tools and technologies or working languages) are rare, they will inevitably command higher rates. Free market logic rules in the tough world of supply and demand, with a degree of balance provided by regular clients who keep supplying work to their ‘usual’ translator(s) irrespective of fluctuating market forces, simply because they do give top priority to the trust factor.

Specialisation means higher earnings if only because the translator can then tackle jobs of increased complexity and technicality which, in turn, increases social recognition on the one hand, and reduces competition on the other – both factors which, together, justify higher consideration and more money.

Specialisation varies very much according to each translator's personal circumstances: every translator specialises sooner or later. Once a certain type of translation (in terms of domain, type of material, category of beneficiaries or users, tools or techniques used) comes to represent around 50% or more of total workload, it makes sense to specialise along those lines.

Once the translator has begun to earn a reasonable and steady income from translation, the surest way to increase turnover is by concentrating on a select portfolio of 'profitable' clients and/or on a more profitable market segment. This would also apply, on a different scale and in different ways, to translation companies. All that remains to be done then is to step up the 'hunt' for contracts in the chosen specialised skills or areas.

Note: It is usually advisable to develop specialised skills rather than to specialise in one specific area. It is also good practise to select two or three technical areas, rather than just one highly specialised field, just in case the market in that particular area suddenly collapses. This happened, for instance, in the telecommunications industry after 2001, which confirmed that a number of different specialisms are always better than just one.

In the case of salaried translators, pay rises are linked to promotion, which in turn is related to skills and specialisation. This usually means taking on new responsibilities, *i.e.* becoming project manager, reviser, product manager or translation manager.

3.2 Increasing productivity

Greater specialisation inevitably leads to increased productivity. By specialising, the translator gains a better knowledge of the specialised fields or subject areas, and this naturally leads to gains in both speed and quality of translation.

3.2.1 'Normal' productivity

For the work provider or the employer, productivity should by definition be 'as high as possible'. The salaried translator will consider that productivity should be: "*reasonable; but quality is what counts*". From the freelance translator's point of view, productivity has to be: "*high enough to ensure the survival of the business unit*" (the translator himself or herself) or "*high enough to guarantee a **reasonable income***", which can, of course, mean different things to different people.

From a purely economic point of view, the productivity of an 'in-house' translator must be such that his translations cost no more than 'outsourced' translations, once all other costs (overheads and running costs) have been taken into account. Calculating translator productivity is in fact rather straightforward, whether it be for a salaried translator (left-hand column), or for a freelance translator (right-hand column).

Salaried translator	Freelance translator
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work out the total cost of the salaried translator on the following basis: cost = annual salary + employer contributions + proof-reading and revision costs + <i>prorated</i> share of overheads and taxes relating to the translation activity (<i>i.e.</i> the salaries and overheads relating to the financial, commercial and secretarial staff, plus various costs relating to external services, etc.) + depreciation + miscellaneous items, including paid-out dividends.2. Divide this figure by the average rate charged per translation unit (page, word or other) to find out how many units the translator needs to produce per year to cover costs.3. Divide the number obtained by the number of days or hours that an employee is legally entitled to work, in order to find how many units the translator should handle on average per day, or per hour.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Determine an acceptable annual income (<i>i.e.</i> profits).2. Add to this figure all the mandatory contributions, professional charges, taxes, subscriptions, depreciation costs, consumables, etc. related to the job, to determine an annual turnover target.3. Divide total turnover by the average rate charged per translation unit (page, word or other) to find out how many units need to be translated every year.4. Divide this figure by the number of days or hours of work that the translator is willing to put in, in order to obtain the average volume the translator needs to translate per day or per hour.

The figures will vary considerably according to cost levels, types of source material, investment levels and depreciation. Some translators can break even at 1,200 words per day, while others may struggle to make ends meet on 4,000 words per day.

The translator (or employer) can then calculate the average real cost of translation by dividing the total costs registered over a given period of time (3, 6 or 12 months for instance) by the volume of translation produced over the same period. If the result is higher than the rates charged, then either the latter should be adjusted upwards, or productivity needs to be increased (or, in the case of the freelancer, longer hours must be put in. . .).

3.2.2 *Increased productivity*

The translator can improve productivity in a number of ways:

- by improving skills and competences,
- by building on experience,
- by improving translation management procedures,
- by specialising and focusing on ‘pure translation’, or, conversely, by giving up ‘pure translation’ altogether,
- by reducing volume and scope,
- by working faster,
- by ‘going automatic’.

- * **Increasing and improving existing skills** will increase the translator's speed, because less time will have to be spent on each stage of the translation process. Productivity gains are obvious in pre-translation when the translator knows the subject-matter, the terminology, and the phraseology. They are also considerable in the post-transfer phase as less checking and revision is required.

To improve skills and competences, the translator should:

- specialise in order to restrict the range of subject areas or translation types;
 - constantly keep abreast with developments in the client's products, processes and concepts.
- * **Building on experience** may be done in four different ways:
 - by consolidating a portfolio of regular clients, because familiarity with the subject area, the type of translation, the terminology and phraseology, the tools and technologies, and the type of service the client expects all help to increase speed and efficiency.
 - by concentrating on a single domain, or on related areas – so that whatever the translator learns and acquires is put to multiple uses.
 - by consolidating and archiving all the translation resources and especially the terminology accumulated over time.
 - by implementing and exploiting translation memories in order to make systematic reuse of previously translated material.
 - * **Improving translation management** becomes reality the moment translation memories come into play. But translation management can also be enhanced by strictly monitoring the workflow (process) and identifying bottlenecks along the critical path of translation. Significant gains can be achieved in particular by systematically comparing estimated times and real times in order to identify the cause of any discrepancies and solve the problems.
 - * Whenever possible, the translator should specialise and concentrate on '**pure**' translation, even if it means paying someone else to carry out other tasks such as terminology management, proof reading, revision, taking dictation, etc.
 - * Conversely, including such **other** tasks in the services the translator charges for can also help increase profitability. Maximum profitability may be gained through specialising in anything but 'pure translation', which is tantamount to changing jobs.
 - * **Reducing the volume and purposes** of the end-product is another way of achieving greater efficiency in providing translation services. In an economic model of translation, this entails choosing the type, mode or degree of

‘finishing’ that will be most cost-effective for a given translation in meeting the client’s and/or end-user’s needs. This may mean:

- not translating anything which is not essential for the purpose in hand or loses significance in the shift in cultures and/or functions;
- not striving to achieve the highest degree of stylistic perfection if this is not an essential requirement for the client;
- not necessarily doing a written translation when a recorded oral translation may be adequate for the purpose.

* **Reducing the time required to do the job** is one of the most effective ways of increasing productivity. To speed up translation, one may:

- use translation memory systems;
- require that source material always be provided in digital format;
- require that source material always be quality certified;
- type-over the translation (*i.e.* type the translation directly into the source text, which is then replaced by the translation);
- whenever possible, dictate the translation, using a digital voice recorder downloading into the computer or using voice recognition technology.

* **Automation** may be an option for companies and/or individual translators who:

- translate large volumes for clients who only want a ‘rough idea’ of what is in the source document – though in this case, the clients themselves soon find out how to use online translation systems

or

- are prepared to carry out extensive post-editing and re-writing of the translated text.

However, given the significant investment in terms of time and effort required to supply the automatic translation system with the necessary resources and to fine-tune the system, this is not really an option for the freelance translator – for whom dictated translation is usually a safer bet.

3.3 Selecting the ‘best’ clients and increasing their numbers

Translators wanting to increase their income will naturally tend to select the most reliable or regular and most profitable clients. For freelance translators, this means, in particular, building up their own client portfolio rather than relying on agencies or translation brokerage companies to supply work.

On the face of it, this would seem perfectly logical, given that agencies or brokers will inevitably rake off their own commission before paying the translator

for the job. In fact, the agency or the broker may well turn out to be the ‘ideal’ client if the translator has neither the means nor the time, nor the inclination, to go out and look for contracts, and if the agency or brokerage company:

- provides the translator with a **real** service in return for their commission, by:
 - guaranteeing regular contracts,
 - providing resources and help of various kinds,
 - providing administrative, accounting and management advice and help,
 - assuming liability for non-payment or litigation,
 - doing final quality checks.
- provides a **real** service to the work provider by:
 - managing the translation projects, the translators and other service providers,
 - reducing the time spent finalising translation contracts,
 - finding and selecting the translators,
 - dispatching the work,
 - assuring quality.

Things may be very different if the agency or brokerage company simply ‘fleeces’ the translators, or if the translators believe this to be the case.

3.4 Updating tariffs regularly

Increased turnover does not necessarily mean what is actually the bottom line for the translator: higher earnings. And everyone must bear in mind that productivity gains are usually made at the expense of something else, that the cost of living moves up and that externalised services have to be paid for. This means tariffs should be updated regularly and, at the same time, the cost of certain items in the overall service rendered has to be reduced. Clients will always complain about price hikes. But it is better to let the discontented go and look for new clients than to try to postpone a long overdue price rise.

Things are different altogether for salaried translators, as they have no say in updating the company’s tariffs. At best, all they can hope for is a pay rise.

4. Avoiding management errors

One of the main problems for anyone starting out in the business is avoiding basic (but ever so costly) management errors. Translators starting out on their own or setting up their own business want to capitalise on their knowledge and know-

how. But few translators have the training or experience required to face what can in some countries be a management nightmare.

Even though translators may not need to be a cross between a chartered accountant and a CFO, they should be knowledgeable about balance sheets, taxes and contributions, budget planning and depreciation rules. As translators are, by definition, constantly acquiring new knowledge and exploring new fields, it is not usually too difficult for them to learn financial management skills. Of course, if all budding translators came onto the market already familiar with basic management principles, they would probably find things easier and many would avoid having to throw in the sponge after a few months or years. Any future freelance translator should acquire (or should be taught) basic financial management and accounting skills. This was in fact the advice given to their future colleagues by 65% of practising translators in a Europe-wide survey carried out in September and October 1998 and repeated in 2004. The interesting point is that such advice was always volunteered spontaneously by respondents: the questionnaire did not include financial management in the list of skills surveyed.

Granted that this is easier said than done, young translators should also heed the following advice from more seasoned translators about the precautions they should take and the mistakes they should avoid making in their early years, *i.e.*:

- Always build in a safety margin when planning work schedules.
- Always keep some time on hand for urgent work from regular clients.
- Always come to a clear agreement with the work provider on conditions of payment (including payment due dates).
- Specify that instalments will be due for large-scale contracts and indicate dates.
- Ask for an advance payment on large contracts – just like any other skilled professional.
- In the case of very large volume translations for the same work provider, ask for instalments on a *pro rata* basis according to state of completion.
- Keep a prospective table of taxes and contributions due and set aside the corresponding *pro rata* on each payment received.
- Never hesitate to undertake the appropriate legal action against those who deliberately refuse payment: they can at least be prevented from causing further damage to other translators. Besides, going to court actually works!
- Make sure that each client is a profit centre. Do not try to balance out loss-making contracts against profitable jobs: you will inevitably end up with more of the former. . . .
- Avoid at all costs getting (heavily) dependent on a single (or massively dominant) work provider: a client who accounts for 50% or more of your turnover can disappear overnight, leaving you high and dry. . . . A 33% ceiling

is a safe bet, but some translators even think it unwise to rely on one client for more than a quarter of your turnover.

5. Optimizing time management

All translators' lives are dominated by time management preoccupations and deadlines (time-to-market pressures).

When it comes to supply, salaried translators are better off as they are normally supplied with work on a regular basis whereas things are more difficult for freelancers: regular work is sometimes hard to come by and translators must not risk losing a good client by turning down a contract. And deadlines are usually far too short (generally because work providers seem to be in the habit of 'forgetting' to include the translation in their schedule) or the contract price is too low (which means that the translator cannot afford to 'waste' time on the job and certainly not on fine-tuned quality control).

Even when both the author of the source document and the work provider are more aware of the time factor and willing to plan for sufficient translation time, the translation seldom starts on schedule: the material is usually just 'not (quite) ready' when it was supposed to. For the translator, this can mean having to be prepared to work fifteen or sixteen hours a day for days on end to meet the deadline on a major contract, and then facing several nail-biting days, or even weeks, with little or no work. To alleviate this, it may be a good idea to have an ongoing book translation in the background to fill in the gaps and also 'take a breather' from the cutting edge technical translation contracts.

Of course, experienced translators can try to persuade their regular clients to schedule their translation needs over several months, but everyone knows that even the sketchiest schedule soon gets out of sync when, as is often the case, one of the following imponderables happens:

- the source text has to be radically re-written just when it is due for translation,
- a new function has just been added to the software application, which means the whole user guide has to be redesigned,
- the work provider suddenly has second thoughts,
- the technical writer is busy on another project and his whole schedule has been re-prioritized,
- head office has forgotten to send the document and the person who was supposed to do that has gone away on a trekking holiday in the Himalayas with no cell-phone and no one is sure about the right version,
- the file has become unreadable and the text has to be typed out again,
- the source document has been lost in the post, and no one has made a copy,

- the file has just ‘evaporated’.

Of course, some translators revel in this kind of situation, especially when they can charge special ‘emergency’ rates (e.g. night or week-end work, extremely short deadlines, etc.). As one ‘high speed’ translator puts it: “*A translator with absolutely no time management problems will not be a translator for very long*”.

Wishful thinkers may also live in the hope that higher tariffs will allow them to slow down a little, that clients will allow more time for the translation, and that they will at long last be able to concentrate on quality and fine-tuning rather than mass production. . . But, when it comes to the crunch, the translator is bound hand and foot to the work provider and has to fit in with the latter’s workflow and organisational practices, or try to change them, or turn down the contract.

6. Managing the ‘in-between’ times

Translation is strongly influenced by economic fluctuations. As we have already pointed out, translation volume is a good indicator of import and export levels, and translators are often the first to be affected by an economic slowdown and the last to feel the benefits of a recovery, because translation is at best seen as an adjunct and not a core part of the products and the production process. This is a fact of life that translation service providers, whatever their status, just have to put up with.

Under normal conditions, translation goes through a series of ‘natural’ cycles. These are determined first of all by the ups and downs in individual work providers’ needs and requirements, and therefore in their translation needs. But the translation ‘cycles’ are also geared to budgetary considerations and to the availability of funds (or liquidity constraints) at certain times of the year. Because of this, some times of year will always be slack, while others see a surge in demand. If translations are not carried out in-house, work providers do not suffer from this state of affairs. By externalising all their translation work, they transfer the impact of the peaks and troughs onto the sub-contractors. The cyclical and often unpredictable nature of demand in the translation industry explains why so many companies rely on sub-contractors to take up the slack or to meet sudden surges in business and why the translator always gets the short end of the stick.

Translators can only try to soften the worst effects of erratic demand patterns by bringing their clients round to the idea of translation needs management by encouraging them to plan when their translation needs are likely to arise, in which language combinations, and what volumes will be required. If their clients can start planning their needs two or three weeks (let us say, a couple of months) ahead, translators should be able to avoid getting cornered.

In any case, translators just must get used to the idea of having to deal with ups and downs in demand and even try and put them to advantage. A lull in activity is the time to put archives in order, update resources (for instance by cleaning up the translation memories for major clients) and more importantly, relentlessly look for new business. This alone will eventually increase the workload and pave the way to the translator's nirvana, *i.e.* a situation where it is the client who has to find a slot in the translator's work schedule, rather than the translator having to bow to the vagaries of demand.

Another solution is for the translator to rely on translation agencies and brokers to supply regular work and cushion the ups and downs thanks to the numbers and variety of their subcontractors. But this is only possible for top-of-the-range translators.

Useful advice to translators

1. You can only hope to manage your production and your tariffs if you know what your productivity actually is in relation to various parameters (*e.g.* according to the circumstances and the type of materials to be translated). To do this, you need to know your overall productivity and productivity per task so as to be able to determine:
 - the income you want to generate and the necessary productivity gains which may be required,
 - the time required for each job.
2. Before drawing up an estimate, always ask the work provider for one or more representative samples of the material for translation: this will help assess the true cost of the job.
3. Never work for less than the job is worth just because you happen to be going through a slack period and you want to keep up your turnover and cover your overheads. This would be suicidal because:
 - Capital has a cost.
 - Selling a service is tantamount to lending money to your client until he pays the invoice. Cutting your profit margin means lending at rock bottom interest rates.
 - You may have to turn down more lucrative work while you finish a bargain basement contract.
 - Working for two different rates means that you end up being your own competitor.
 - Cutting your rates means undercutting other translators and forcing down tariffs across the board.
 - Your other clients will eventually find out that you have charged them higher rates and will take their custom elsewhere.

- Any time spent on ‘survival’ work is time not spent on advertising, following up contacts and looking for contracts.
- 4. So what *is* the answer?
 - Only give discounts for very good reasons (regular clients, special jobs, large volumes, ‘open’ contracts, etc.).
 - Stick to your standard tariff but offer improved or extended service. Everyone will eventually hear about any extras of yours.
 - Stand up to clients who always demand ‘a bit more for a bit less’. The answer is clearly and emphatically “NO”.

Adapted from Norman Brodsky – The Capacity Trap – *Inc.* – August 1996
(www.inc.com/magazine/19960801/1759.html)

Living in a crowd

Interacting with no end of ‘partners’

Introduction

The specialised translator now lives fairly and squarely in the modern world, interacting on a regular basis with a whole range of partners, and not only *via* the Internet.

1. Translators and their work providers

Translators sometimes entertain a difficult relationship with their work providers. Of course, they play a pivotal role because the translations they undertake are by definition considered essential (otherwise, why would anyone have commissioned them?), but they are also on the sidelines insofar as (a) translation is generally not part of the work provider’s core business and (b) translation always appears to be slightly out of sync with the rest of the processes.

Abiding by a few basic rules helps establish and keep up a good business and working relationship with work providers:

- always treat each work provider as an important client, irrespective of the volume of work supplied and **particularly** if the contracts are rather small;
- always fulfil the client’s requirements and whatever has been promised or agreed on;
- always provide that extra service that the client did not expect and that can be produced at very little or no extra cost (*e.g.* a paper copy of a glossary for in-house use, a word of advice);
- always comply with the client’s specifications or, if in doubt, discuss them with him in a positive way;
- get the client involved in any decisions that need to be made, or, at least, make sure the client is aware of the options and gets a chance to decide (or to approve the translator’s own choice);
- get the client to sign a contract or agreement – in whatever form;

- never do anything that has not been agreed on **without consulting the client** (e.g. never sub-contract part of the work or cut corners on quality without consulting and giving justification and guarantees);
- always keep the client informed if there is any risk or likelihood that the translation may not comply with the original specifications or not be completed on time;
- always deliver **high quality work, on time, and for the price originally agreed**;
- remember to include the client in any customer relationship building exercises, *i.e.* gifts, greeting cards, personal visits, telephone follow-ups, open days, information on new staff or new tools and systems, promotional campaigns or demonstrations, new services, etc.

In a word, a good business relationship between the translator and any one client is based on:

- mutual trust,
- communication and discussion (explanation and negotiation),
- a clear contractual basis.

The contractual agreement, which requires discussion of the issues involved, clarifies the mutual obligations and responsibilities of both parties, thus reducing the risk of undermining the trust that cements any business relationship. It must be remembered, in that respect, that both the work provider and the translator are normally closely bound in the quality assurance process, and that the former should play an active part in it on request by the latter.

1.1 Educating the work provider

One may well wonder if there is any translator who has not at some point in his career complained about being misunderstood by the work provider or by the contractor (the person acting on behalf of the work provider). Educating the work provider is a worthwhile pursuit. The purpose of the exercise is to ‘teach’ the work provider how complex the translation process is and how that process can be improved with a bit more input on his side.

In most cases, the ‘first-time’ work provider (a) generally hasn’t a clue what translation entails, (b) cannot understand that it is not simply a matter of knowing languages, (c) has no idea how complex a process translating actually is, (d) feels it takes far too long, (e) finds the result at best passable because he has no clear benchmarks by which to judge the result, (f) cannot understand why the translator needs to ‘look up things’ and, last but not least, (g) finds translation is terribly/rather/a little (tick whichever applies) overpriced. And this is a perfectly natural reaction ...

It is therefore necessary to explain what translation is about (with a little help from professional associations and colleagues) and:

- demonstrate that translation is in fact a complex process, by identifying and explaining the different stages,
- show, through an example, how any important translation requires no end of checking and counter-checking,
- explain how long each stage in the translation process takes, and why,
- stop using word count as the basis for estimates and invoices, and opt for a set rate or an hourly or daily rate (as in other standard business practices),
- refuse to lower rates, by arguing that basic costs and overheads cannot be reduced,
- refuse to be underpaid for any translation work, on any grounds whatsoever,
- use a simple but useful battery of ordinary business instruments (*i.e.* delivery forms, quality control forms, standard agreements, general conditions of sale, etc.) to show that translation is just as **serious** as any other business.

All this will demonstrate that translation is not just a pursuit for enlightened or ‘inspired’ amateurs but is actually a very serious (and more often than not highly technical) activity carried out seriously by serious professionals.

Of course, translators will always seek to be understood and appreciated by the work provider (and will seek to involve the work provider in the translation process as far as he will go), but they also have a duty to comply very strictly with the work provider’s brief and instructions, even when these seem misguided or downright silly. In this case, the translator should try to convince the work provider and, if unsuccessful, can either decide to apply the instructions blindly or, as a last resort, refuse to do the job.

To put the picture straight, it must also be emphasized that more and more work providers have undertaken to ‘educate’ their translators by imposing stringent requirements and enforcing drastic specifications, precisely because they take translation very seriously and want to apply to the purchase and procurement of that particular service the same principles and procedures that apply across their business.

A special case: the in-house translator

In-house translators often have difficulty fitting into the right slot within the company. In R&D or production departments, they should by all rights be members of the technical team as this would give them unlimited access to the authors, product designers, and potential information providers or proof-readers. Yet, there is every chance that they will be located in the communication or documentation department, and therefore immediately set apart from the very

people they will need to consult on a daily basis. Admittedly, of course, intranets and networking make remote contact possible at all times but translators would like to work where they think they belong: the technical or product lifecycle side.

In an ideal set-up (a) translation would be attached to the R&D or production functions, or to any other department or service actually commissioning the translation work and (b) all members of staff would have an obligation to contribute the information required by translators (and technical writers) and to take part in the quality control process applied to any documentation produced by the company or on the company's behalf.

2. Translators and prime contractors

The prime contractor may be:

- the work provider's authorised representative, acting on his behalf,
- a third party who has won a bid to carry out all or part of the work.

In the first instance, the prime contractor simply stands in for the work provider and the points made about relations between the translator and the work provider will apply, except that the prime contractor generally has a more proactive role and will not wait for the translator to ask questions. A translator working for a prime contractor will generally have less leeway than when working directly for the work provider or translation requester, as the contractor will enforce detailed specifications for the job in hand.

The translator's position is more awkward when the prime contractor is in effect a 'middle-man' (and therefore a profit centre) between the work provider/translation requester and himself. When this is the case, the translator normally has no direct contact with the work provider and therefore not with the authors or designers of the material to be translated either. This may be because the prime contractor does not want the work provider to be aware that the work has been sub-contracted, or because he wants to prevent any possibility of access from the translator to the work provider. The translator is therefore entirely in the prime contractor's hands as only the latter will be able to contact the work provider. Some translators may be quite happy with this kind of set up because (a) they like to feel they can assume full responsibility for any decisions and choices they might make (b) they are therefore quite satisfied that the prime contractor will prevent the work provider from interfering in the translation and (c) this means that – in theory at least – the prime contractor alone will be in the line of fire if ever the work provider is unhappy with the work.

3. Translators and project managers

Generally, whenever a translation is divided into job lots shared out between a number of translators, a project manager is appointed.

The project manager may be appointed by the translation company. Or he may be appointed by the work provider or the prime contractor – in which case he is technically a ‘job manager’.

Whatever the situation, the project manager is the absolute ‘boss’ who has the final say in all matters relating to the way the translation will be carried out and whose instructions all translators and editors/revisers must obey. The key to good relations between the project manager and the translators are:

- a detailed and comprehensive set of specifications, rules, and procedures.
- compliance with a reasonable but strictly enforced work schedule,
- regular reporting both ways,
- strict *a priori* harmonisation, thanks to:
 - clear, detailed directives, models, templates and benchmarks,
 - shared validated terminology and phraseology resources,
 - perfect coordination of whatever changes are necessary: all the translators must adopt whatever changes are deemed necessary at the same time, failing which harmonisation would become a time-consuming and expensive process,
- ongoing dialogue and regular progress reporting throughout the project,
- insistence on final harmonisation.

In project work, harmonisation is vital: any attempts by individual translators to be original inevitably threaten the whole project. This does not prevent translators from expressing doubts, making comments or suggestions, or pointing out apparent mistakes or discrepancies, but no change can be made unless and until it has been approved by the project manager and, from that moment, absolutely everyone must implement it.

4. Translators and finance, accounting, purchasing departments

For obvious reasons, translators need to keep on the good side of their work provider’s accounting or finance department or purchasing department, and to get on well with the people involved.

This means the translator has to be careful to:

- supply all the financial and accounting paperwork required on time (as normally specified in the contract);
- make sure the documents supplied comply with the contract specifications.

It is also through the purchasing department – providing they are in charge of translation contracts – that the translator will be able to establish a good business relationship with the work provider and will get first hand information about future contracts or calls for tenders.

5. Translators and writers or designers

Contacts between the translator and the author/writer or the designer of the material to be translated generally occur when the translator needs clarification on a number of points.

The translator is, by definition, the author's or designer's most attentive reader, however arduous the task. He may need to consult with the author or designer of the material over content, organisation, or style. In other words: when there is something wrong or presumably wrong. And this is where caution is required.

One of the most devastating mistakes a young translator can make is to wrongly question an author's or designer's judgement. What the translator may take for a mistake is often perfectly legitimate in the technical field concerned and, in any case, trying to score points against the author of a technical document by pointing out 'mistakes' is a sure way of making a lifelong enemy.

Any queries or questions should be approached with tact and caution: "*I don't quite see what is meant here*" or "*I'm not quite sure I understand what this refers to*" are always preferable to a frontal attack. Frequently, the translator makes the writer realize that there was in fact an omission, a badly phrased or ambiguous sentence or even a genuine mistake in the text . . . But the translator should always tread carefully: any defect is most likely to be attributed to the word processor, the secretary, the typist or the student intern who either "*made unwarranted changes*" or, on the contrary, "*did not correct what he/she had been instructed to correct*". What the translator can hope will happen is greater awareness on the part of the author, who may be a bit more careful when next drafting a document.

What the translator also has to realize is that many of the people who write documentation are not professional writers, that many find it a chore and that, unlike the translator, most of them are primarily engineers and technicians . . . All the more reason why translators should take care not to antagonize them.

When translations are carried out in-house, relations between the translator and the author/writer or designer should normally be closer (they work on the

same premises) easier (both work for the same company or organisation and both do serve the same interests) and more profitable (in that the author can explain meaning in detail and provide the translator with all the necessary information and explanations about the subject matter, the product, or the domain concerned).

6. Translators and proof-readers

The job of the proof-readers, in theory at least, is to correct whatever is blatantly wrong in a translation while at the same time identifying and pointing out anything they find strange or unusual or ambiguous. Since it is not their job to correct the translation proper, they are not felt to be actually passing judgement on the quality of the translator's work.

All the same, translators who rely on 'volunteer' proof-readers must be wary of exhausting potential resources. Even the most willing partners need some kind of compensation for their pains, in cash or in kind (*i.e.* free translation or other services in return). And translators must also be very careful not to place their proof-readers under the kind of pressure – in terms of notice and deadlines – that they themselves resent on the part of their work providers.

Even when the relationship with the proof-readers is defined within an institutional framework of some kind (*e.g.* when both the translator and the proof-reader work for the same employer) the translator must be careful to stick to schedule and give the proof-reader sufficient notice for the job in hand.

7. Translators and revisers

The relationship between translators and revisers is often a difficult one. The reviser is all too often seen by the translator both as a quality assessor and as a stern and unforgiving schoolteacher, out to correct all 'mistakes'. No one, whatever the circumstances, enjoys being subjected to critical appraisal, especially when it is relentless and uncompromising, as the reviser's has to be. Many a translator feels tempted to take the easy way out of any problem and say: "*Let the reviser get on with it then and do the translation himself, if he's so good at it...*" To make things worse, the reviser may, at times, make rash corrections, overlooking the fact that the translator has had to compromise to come up with what seemed to him to be the only possible solution, *albeit* a not very satisfactory one.

If the reviser has been commissioned by the translator, problems seldom arise. Both will work as a team and share responsibility for the ultimate quality of the translation and also for the economic viability of the job. The translator soon learns that the reviser is there to add value, not to correct elementary mistakes,

more especially as the price charged for the translation is the sum of the price paid for the translation and the price paid for the revision – meaning that it is in his best interest to make the time spent on revision as short as possible.

If the reviser has been commissioned by the work provider, the respective contracts of the translator and reviser are independent. The shift is from the idea of a partnership to that of a test of strength, with the reviser having the upper hand most if not all of the time.

Whatever the circumstances, both the translator and the reviser should, to avoid conflicts, consider that they are jointly and severally responsible for the quality of the end product in the sense that any failing on the part of either one will necessarily have a detrimental effect on the assessment of their joint performance. This implies:

1. that there should be a dialogue between the reviser and the translator, and that the latter should be able to defend his point of view and retain ultimate responsibility for making the corrections,
2. that the reviser's work should be carried out in optimal conditions for maximum efficiency.

This means:

- that a clear definition of the mutual responsibilities of the translator and the reviser should be spelled out in a written agreement;
- that unless otherwise specified, all translations submitted to the reviser should be of 'revisable' quality, *i.e.* in the right format, free of language-related errors, free of unintentional omissions, complete with the source material and the necessary resources, and with all the unresolved difficulties and remaining queries clearly indicated;
- that the reviser's corrections should be as light-handed as possible;
- that revision should move from simply correcting or post-editing the finished translation towards assessing and approving the basic resources and options and advising the translator before the beginning of the actual translation. This means that the role of the reviser has to shift from quality control and upgrading to quality assurance and advance validation. The reviser should thus become a previser.

A translator should at all costs avoid (a) irritating (b) annoying and (c) enraging the reviser. These successive states are usually brought on by the following:

- a significant number of 'elementary' mistakes that the translator could and should have corrected,
- repetitive errors (especially if they have already been pointed out and even corrected by the same reviser in previous translations),
- the translator deliberately trying to paper over hesitations or uncertainties,

- the translator leaving it to the reviser to sort out difficulties,
 - the translator deliberately ignoring directions or advice given by the reviser prior to the start of the translation,
 - non compliance with the work specifications,
 - hard copies with single line spacing which are impossible to annotate,
 - the presence of computer viruses in the files,
- ...to mention but a few.

One simple rule that can help the reviser keep his hair on and stay on good terms with the translator is the following: each correction is made only once (*i.e.* on its first occurrence) and the translator is responsible for correcting all subsequent occurrences of the same mistake.

8. Translators and technical experts

Technical experts have a particular type of expertise that the translator does not possess and that is needed in the course of a particular project involving such skills as transcribing videos, burning subtitles, disassembling sites or programmes, converting or back converting files, re-designing Web page buttons or windows, changing software interfaces, programming runtimes, etc.

The first priority in this context is to define the respective roles of the translator and the technical experts. The prime responsibility is generally decided by the work provider or his prime contractor when awarding the contract for the job. Given a choice, it is generally thought advisable to award the contract for the whole project to the translator when the latter has the required technical know-how in the sense that he has a good understanding of the different phases of the project, the expected outcomes, the resources required and how long each phase should ideally take.

If the translator (or project manager) is given responsibility for organising the whole process, he should:

- take the time to explain to the technical experts what the ‘translating bit’ is about,
- carefully schedule the various actions by the technical experts,
- spell out the required specifications for each job,
- specify the quality control tests and procedures,
- specify who will be responsible for making any corrections, and at what stage,
- only approach competent specialists in the areas concerned,
- be careful to prepare and forward the necessary sets of materials to the relevant operators on schedule and check that all the necessary equipment and software is available,

- specify the destination of the end-results (and where exactly they should be forwarded).

If, on the contrary, the translator is working *for* the technical experts, he should:

- ask the experts to clarify exactly what his responsibilities will be,
- specifically ask to be shown where his work fits into the overall schedule,
- ask for a detailed set of specifications,
- find out what quality control tests and procedures will be applied,
- find out who will be responsible for making any corrections, and at what stage,
- specify the contents of any requested or required kit,
- find out who the end-result should be sent to (with names, addresses and coordinates).

9. Translators and information providers¹⁰

Relations with information providers will depend very much on the type of information or help required. Generally speaking, however, information providers tend to consider that they are technical experts addressing someone (*i.e.* the translator) who is by definition not an expert in their field and who is likely to be wasting their precious time – with the notable (but rare) exception of technical experts employed in the same firm as the translator and whose job contract stipulates that they must provide such information. The translator should abide by the following basic rules:

- * Always keep the time required down to a minimum, by:
 - doing some basic homework in the particular area concerned (do not approach the expert as if he were an “*all-you-need-to-know*” guide to the subject...);
 - preparing and prioritizing questions;
 - recording the answers (nothing can be more annoying for the expert than having to wait for the translator to write down what he has just said);
 - if possible, sending the questions beforehand, by fax or by e-mail so that the expert knows what to expect and may even regroup answers to related questions.

10. For further information on this point, see: *Terminologie et phraséologie pour traduire – le Concordancier du Traducteur* – Maison du Dictionnaire, Paris 1997, by the same author.

- * Question the experts about technical issues only, not about linguistic issues:
 - a technical expert will not understand why a translator (who is supposed to be a linguist) would need to ask questions relating to language problems;
 - answers to questions about technical issues and concepts will always provide the relevant terminology or phraseology on top of the technical explanations;
 - the only way technical experts answer language-related questions is through literal translation. The chances are for their translation to be much in line with what any translation engine on the Web would offer. A technical expert should never be shown the text (which is what he will naturally ask for) ... unless he happens to be a translator into the bargain.
- * Make sure the experts never feel 'caught out' in their area of expertise. An expert who loses face will be unlikely to want to co-operate in future.
- * Always remember the rules of common courtesy, *i.e.*:
 - Make appointments.
 - Make sure the appointment still holds before turning up.
 - When late, always warn the person you are due to meet and remember to apologize.
 - Thank the information provider and, whenever possible (*i.e.* confidentiality rules permitting), forward a copy of the relevant pages or extracts translated thanks to the information provided.
- * Keep the channels open for the future:
 - offer to compensate the information provider for the help provided – on an hourly basis at the going rate for her/his profession.

10. Translators and other operators

Translators may also be involved with other in-house or outsourced services, *i.e.* those responsible for graphics, infographics and layout, copying and printing, documentation, marketing and sales, and any other department that handles the translated material and possibly the 'product' or process the translated material happens to be embedded in (*e.g.* the technical department responsible for testing a localised software application) and, more generally, anyone involved with the production, promotion, sale or distribution of the translated material and/or the integrating products or processes.

Most of the time, these contacts occur in crisis situations, because the translation has not been scheduled properly and the translator does not hold enough

clout to be able to have a say in the matter. Translators therefore often stand at the receiving end of a lot of flak which should not normally have gone their way. In order to avoid misunderstandings and grievances, they should:

- specify what minimum **notice** will be required for any work involving translation;
- **spell out** the specifications for any task to be carried out;
- stick to **deadlines**;
- ask for instructions, requests and observations to be delivered in writing – and do likewise.

11. Colleagues and fellow translators

Relations with colleagues or fellow translators are not generally a problem, because all translators know they are basically a fragile minority and that they are all in the same boat together.

Every translator may be an island, but there are bridges between the islands, so to speak. Professional solidarity stems from the fact that translators all share similar working conditions, statuses and potential problems, *i.e.* difficulties with work providers or prime contractors, lack of consideration, difficulties in accessing information, being considered outside the mainstream of business, difficulties in recovering payments due, ambiguities in status, increasing investment costs, new threats posed by a rapidly evolving market, etc.

The feeling of being on common ground is all the stronger when translators work in close-cooperation in the same department or company either on the same projects or by sharing resources (terminology resources or shared translation memories, for instance) *via* an intranet or by proof-reading and revising each other's translations.

Freelance translators may also develop this same spirit of co-operation to face increasing market pressure. Groupings of freelance translators are based on close co-operation between their members. But the same market pressures mean that freelance translators and translation companies are becoming direct competitors. All the more reason why translators should abide by strict ethical and professional rules and never, under any circumstance, criticize a colleague's work, offer to do a job for less than it is worth, artificially lower rates, gain contracts under false pretences (by pretending to do the work in-house while in fact farming it out at a lower rate) or do anything which amounts to unfair competition (see the chapter on *The translator and professional ethics*).

It must also be remembered that the world of translation is almost everywhere a particularly very small world, with no more than a few thousand professionals

and a few hundred businesses, and that gossip gets around very quickly. Rumours about this or that company being '*in trouble*' or about this translator who ... or that translator who ... are rife in every city or region. Most of the time, the information is absolutely unfounded, but the rumours keep on going the rounds for a few days or weeks. Translators should take the elementary precaution never to be a party to rumours of this kind.

12. Technical experts or linguists?

Translators are generally seen primarily as linguists. The fact that they are not readily considered as people with technical expertise is rather annoying when we know that work providers often assume that a technical translation should be done by no other than an expert in the field. To move beyond the common misconceptions and prejudices, one must be careful to make a distinction between the 'translator-with-technical-expertise' and the '*linguist who does translations*' on the one hand, and between the 'technical expert-with-expertise-as-translator' and the '*engineer who has done languages*' on the other.

Let us start with the premise that neither the '*linguist who does translations*' nor the '*engineer who has studied languages*' can really be considered as professional translators. The translations they produce tend to be equally inadequate if not altogether calamitous and there is not much to choose between the two. The other two types can both perfectly legitimately consider themselves as 'translators' and should not be viewed as rivals in the profession. Strangely enough, anyway, engineers never feel threatened by competition from the 'linguists'...

The 'translator-with-technical-expertise' has a perfect knowledge of two languages, has been trained as a professional translator and has (through university, through continuing education or, more often than not, through an ongoing self-learning process) acquired the necessary **technical background in any area his translations refer to**. The 'technical expert-with-expertise-as-translator' has a technical background, a perfect knowledge of two languages **and** adequate training – or experience – in professional translation. Both have similar approaches and similar interests to defend.

In fact, in most countries, both types of backgrounds (translators with technical expertise and technical experts with translating expertise) can be found in the profession in almost equal numbers. Translator training institutions happily take on both linguists and students with technical backgrounds, and if there are usually more of the former, it can be put down to the fact that an engineer or expert in a particular field can usually earn more by exercising her/his professional skills in a technical capacity than as a translator, except in countries where it is common practise for engineers to have a second job to make ends meet, or when rising

unemployment in certain sectors means that a number of qualified engineers or experts in a given field suddenly turn towards translation as a way of earning a living, simply because it is still a relatively open profession. And there is unquestionably such a thing as unfair competition from some experts, who undertake to do translations for a fee without paying any of the normal taxes and contributions.

Under normal conditions, the ideal situation would be one where translators and technical experts work in partnership, with the latter checking and revising **from a technical point of view** the work done by the translators. In this case, both partners would be paid according to their respective shares of the work, and it is this kind of partnership which normally produces the highest quality translations by pooling skills and resources.

This kind of partnership, with the technical element 'intruding' in the translation process, has now become almost inevitable in areas such as localisation, where the translator works alongside the IT expert in charge of designing, implementing and/or testing the programme or Web site. The moot question is how much of the process (and of the proceeds) the translator can legitimately claim.

In some countries, the ideal of a mutually beneficial working partnership between translators and technical experts is still largely wishful thinking, but experience shows that this is the way forward, not only because the pooling of skills leads to optimal translation quality, but because each player is then no longer confronted with the difficulties encountered when working in isolation. Each partner can thus work more confidently and more productively, providing, of course, market conditions allow work to be shared out in this way.

It is by no means certain that market conditions will allow this kind of balanced partnership to endure, given the two major trends now under way:

- the markets (and the work providers) are now demanding more and more advanced technical skills and know-how, and tend to favour operators whose initial specialism is the relevant technical area of competence;
- a growing number of contracts tend to be sub-divided into two sub-contracts, *i.e.* the 'text translation' on the one hand, which is left to the translators or the 'linguists', and the more lucrative technical operations on the other, which are devolved to the 'technical experts'.

In this context, it is far easier for the 'technical expert' to restrict the share of the work devolved to the translator than for the latter to encroach on the 'expert's' domain. It is therefore not too surprising to find a growing number of translator training institutions in Western Europe choosing to take on applicants with technical expertise in a relevant field or, alternatively, translators with at least five years' experience and a confirmed and well-established 'specialism'.

It must also be remembered that translators will soon be, and are already, competing with monolingual Web site designers and creators and other such

specialists and, more often than not, Web agencies. Translators are now faced with a clear alternative: either they try to corner this market (or a significant share of it) on the grounds that it is more rational to give a contract for multilingual Web site development to someone who has the multilingual and multicultural expertise **and** who is trained in Web site development – especially now that Web site development software, like any other kind of software, is becoming more and more ‘user-friendly’ – or they can simply sit back and let themselves be gradually squeezed out of this sector of the market on the grounds that it is better to trust a Web site designer when it comes to setting up a new Web site and then have translators translate the ‘text’ into the relevant foreign language. Unless, of course, the Web site designer is also prepared to do the translation himself (he probably can’t see why he shouldn’t, if you ask him!) before ‘cloning’ the site...

Professional ethics

Introduction

Any *bona fide* translator will tacitly comply with an ethical code. The one below is based on (a) a survey of agreements between translators and their business partners and (b) over 200 telephone and e-mail interviews conducted in 1998–99 among translators in a number of European countries as part of a translation quality management project (MLIS3010 – 24928) and repeated on a larger scale in 2004.

1. Basic rules

Professional translators shall:

- never undertake any action or engage in any practice liable to throw the profession or professionals into disrepute;
- always show respect for other people and their opinions, especially when writing to mailing lists and Web forums;
- always comply with the laws and regulations relating to tax and social security or other mandatory contributions in force at the place of work;
- always make available and use all resources needed to carry out the agreed or contractual tasks in compliance with the required standards;
- never knowingly cheat a client (in particular, by concealing the fact that a source document is already available in translation);
- always resist any attempt to restrict their intellectual freedom and any pressures designed to make them knowingly produce a deliberately distorted, or inaccurate, or misleading translation;
- be prepared to admit full liability for any deficiencies, errors or failings in the translation, unless such deficiencies, errors or failings be the result of deficiencies, errors or failings in the source material, or of failure on the part of the work provider to carry out his contractual or commonly accepted obligations or duties;

Except where this might become an incentive for work providers to go to justice for no particular reason other than that ‘the insurance will pay’, this kind of liability should be covered by a third party insurance to be negotiated with the translator’s insurance company.

- never undertake any task which is beyond their field of competence or where it is obvious that the necessary degree of competence cannot be achieved within the timescale allowed by the contract;
- never take on work they know will be impossible to carry out within the terms of the contract;
- always complete whatever task they have undertaken to carry out – given that commitments should be made in writing so as to avoid any subsequent misinterpretation or litigation;
- never in any way breach the confidentiality of any source material or of any translation for any reason whatsoever;
- never in any way breach the confidentiality of any information obtained during the course of a contract (*e.g.* information on the work provider’s marketing campaigns, clients, tariffs, internal organisation, prototypes, research projects and contracts, tax matters, etc.) or act in such a way that such information is revealed, whether intentionally or unintentionally;
- never disseminate or make public any source material or translated material without the prior authorisation of the authors, copyright holders or their legal representatives;
- never deliberately convey a false impression to clients or third parties as regards their qualifications and competence (*e.g.* through misleading publicity, by using unwarranted titles or academic qualifications or by sub-contracting work to others without acknowledging the fact and getting prior agreement in writing from the client concerned);
- never use for their own personal benefit any information obtained in the course of a professional contract.

2. Vis-à-vis the work provider

Professional translators shall:

- never tolerate or practise any kind of discrimination towards the work provider or translation requester on grounds of social status, religious convictions, nationality, ethnic group or other;
- always remain impartial and refuse to let their own convictions interfere with the translation being undertaken (or, if need be, use a clause of conscience to withdraw from, or refuse, the contract);

- always be above board and honest with the work provider or prime contractor;
- always comply strictly with the contractual obligation to defend the work provider's interests, or, if this should prove incompatible with their feelings, or with their religious, ethical or moral convictions, use the clause of conscience to terminate the contract, in the knowledge that **everyone is free to refuse a contract without having to justify the decision** - with the exception of sworn translators and, to a lesser extent, salaried translators who may however, resort to a clause of conscience;
- always protect the work provider's interests – as long as the latter remain within the law and ethics – by making sure the translation shall have no adverse effects on such interests;
- always comply with the work provider's instructions and specifications, or indicate clearly whatever grounds there might be for disagreement and why;
- always inform the work provider as soon as it becomes clear that they may not be able to meet a commitment;
- always inform the work provider before sub-contracting any part of a contract.

3. In the course of a translation job

Professional translators shall:

- make a true and honest translation in all circumstances and resist any pressure to the contrary;
- never make a choice of translation that might turn out to be detrimental to the work provider's interests, without consulting the work provider beforehand;
- never try to interpret the meaning of a source document or modify the content or structure of a source document without consulting the work provider;
- never attempt to translate anything they do not understand;
- **never try to pass off what is mere guesswork in translation as certain and validated;**
- always notify the reviser or the work provider of any unresolved problems or difficulties;
- never ever compromise on the quality of a translation in terms of meaning, technical accuracy or factual accuracy;
- never knowingly compromise on the quality of a translation with regard to the agreed standards without having discussed the matter with the work provider and explaining why the originally agreed standards cannot, or will not, be met;
- if incapable, for whatever reason, of fulfilling an assignment within the terms of the contract, ask for the contract to be terminated and hand over any resources that have already been prepared for the translation;

- unless sub-contracting has been discussed and authorised under the terms of the contract, never resort to sub-contractors without having previously notified the work provider;
- on completion of a contract, always hand over any documents or resources provided by the work provider;
- always assume that – unless otherwise specified in the contract – the quality required is ‘deliverable’ quality as agreed with the work provider;
- unless otherwise agreed, always abide by recognised professional quality criteria, *i.e.* compliance with the principle of identity of document type and functions and convergence of meaning and discourse between source and target material, clear marking of structure, consistent use of standard and homogeneous terminology and phraseology, absence of unintentional ambiguity of meaning, absence of unwarranted cultural discrepancies, compliance with all applicable standards;
- always get a **third party** to proofread the translation, and failing that, indicate that the translation has not been proofread.

4. With regard to payment

Professional translators shall:

- always expect fair and honest payment for any work completed;
- never accept payment clearly below the going rate for any job;
- never deliberately reduce the rate for a job with a view to cutting corners on quality in return;
- never cheat on quantities (*i.e.* on the volume translated or on the time spent translating).

5. Vis-à-vis colleagues or fellow translators

Professional translators shall:

- always be loyal to colleagues or fellow translators, providing they themselves comply with all the recognised ethical and regulatory duties of the profession;
- never aid and abet anyone who deliberately disregards the rules and obligations of the profession;
- never resort to unfair competition against a colleague or fellow translator, and in particular, never deliberately undercut a fellow translator to win a contract;
- never accept lower payment on the grounds that the work provider has provided resources (*e.g.* glossaries or translation memories) compiled by

another translator (and, in such circumstances, always notify the translator concerned since the work provider may not, without due acknowledgment and compensation, use any item or product for which he has not acquired the copyright);

- never publicly pass judgement on or criticize a colleague or fellow translator, unless this is part of a duly recognised audit or assessment process;
- when involved in professional audits or assessments of work carried out by fellow translators, always demand that the people concerned be duly informed of the process and of the results and be given a fair chance to defend their case whenever appropriate;
- undertake to ensure that any third party sub-contracted to do work complies with professional rules and ethics and with the specifications as set by the work provider. This clause or any clause to the same effect should be written into any contractual agreement between any work provider and any translator as a matter of routine.

6. Vis-à-vis partners

Professional translators shall:

- ensure that any person providing significant assistance with the translation without being bound to do so by contract or otherwise with the work provider or with the translator, receives due compensation (in whatever form) and, as the case may be, is duly mentioned as having provided such assistance;
- ensure that the intellectual property rights of any person contributing to the translation are duly enforced;
- acknowledge and thank any person having contributed to the translation process, in whatever capacity;
- always return books, documentation, tools and any other resources lent by third parties.

Certification

ISO, DIN, CEN and more

The translation industry and profession are being swept along on the global tide of quality assurance and quality control. Many companies are now walking down the path to certification, which is seen as the best way to promote quality assurance.

Unlike the quest for quality, which has been around for a long time in the translation industry, certification as such is relatively new on the scene. The trend has gained momentum as those work providers who have themselves obtained quality certification in their areas of competence become more and more reluctant to work with any partners who cannot offer the same formal level of guarantee.

Gaining true certification (proof, by an external body, of compliance with certain predetermined standards) is a long and expensive process and cynics will be quick to point out that it is also no insurance against poor or disastrous translations, given that a poor translator can fare quite badly while adhering strictly to the procedures.

Translation companies can, and do, apply for the relevant certification under one of the ISO 900X/9000⁺ standards. This has now become a must for any translation company and is expected to become mandatory for all translation agencies and brokers. Translation companies and agencies can also apply specifically for certification under the EN-15038 standard (European Quality Standard for Translation Services).

There are also a number of simple solutions open to all translators (as individual translators do not have the time or money to go through the process of getting full-blown certification the ISO or CEN way):

1. Translators may consider that the qualification obtained at the end of a vocational course by way of credits or a diploma or a degree is in itself some sort of quality certification, and that applying for further certification would amount to recognising that the course is in some way below standard. They consider that they are already fully qualified and that 'certification' is inherent in the qualification awarded, which is in fact quite true in some university courses where specifications are harshest than any standard would warrant, but not so true in other cases. And that is precisely where the problem lies.

2. Translators can produce their own personal quality assurance 'kit', which should at least include the following:
 - a full description of the standard translation process and typical variations (under the name of general conditions of sale and/or general conditions of translation service provision),
 - a full description of the standard procedures for carrying out each of the actually planned or possible operations,
 - a standard set of contractual agreements and negotiation procedures taking into account all the possible options for the client,
 - a list of all the quality controls applied to each translation.

This type of kit has a number of advantages for all concerned:

- the translator and the work provider can reach an agreement with reference to a documented list of critical areas and options;
- the translator can specify in detail how the work will be carried out;
- the work provider knows exactly what is actually going to be done, how it will be done and what guarantees can be expected;
- the translator can spell out what type of co-operation would be appreciated, if possible, on the work provider's part.

This may be seen as a kind of 'poor man's certification process', but at least it lays down the basis for what might progressively grow into a full quality control system. It can lead to more 'official' certification at a later stage. Its simple merit is that it makes everything clear for any work provider who cares to know.

3. When and where this is actually feasible, translators can get accreditation from one or more translators' associations or accreditation boards. Procedures vary greatly but always rely on a process of evaluating competence. Among the associations and authorities that have accreditation exams are OTIAQ (Quebec), ASTM and ATA (USA), SATI (South Africa), NAATI (Australia).
4. Special accreditation may also be got, today, from translation software vendors [SDL being a case in point].
5. Translators can ask their regular work providers to include translation among the business activities for which they are requesting certification.

This, of course, is only possible when the work provider is just starting or planning to undergo the certification process. The advantage for the work providers is that they can certify a comprehensive translation quality assurance and quality control procedure that they will then require all future translation service providers to comply with.

6. Translators can 'refer to' such as the DIN 2345 standard.

The DIN 2345 standard is a German quality standard which, to all intents and purposes, is not much more than a code of good practice. The standard sets out the rules that translators should follow in their everyday professional practise, and which are in fact common sense recommendations rather than technical standards *per se*. They include the rules that the work provider should also apply or, more precisely, the rules that translators think work providers should apply to themselves.

Any translator who abides by the said rules can claim to be in compliance with the DIN standard and is entitled:

- either to indicate, on all contractual documents or on the actual translation, that the translation has been carried out “*in compliance with DIN 2345*” (if challenged, it is then up to the translator to prove that the work effectively complies with the standard);
 - or to ask for DIN CERTCO¹¹ registration, which will enable him to back up his assertions with a DIN registration number.
7. Translators can apply for certification as per a given standard. This means that they have to demonstrate compliance with what the standard requires. It is a complicated, lengthy and costly process but well worth the trouble in terms of goodwill.

Certification may be obtained from an external body or individual, in which case, its acceptability will depend on the reputation of the external assessor.

Certification may also be obtained from an accredited body (a body certified by the relevant standards organisation to deliver certifications), in which case it is an accredited certification and has absolute credibility.

Among the existing standards for translation are the Italian UNI 10574 standard, available at www.unicei.it, the Austrian Önorm D 1200/1201 standard available at www.on-norm.at, the ASTM standard available at accu-rapid.com/journal, the EN15038 European Quality Standard for Translation Services at www.euatc.org, the German DIN 2345 standard at www.fask.uni-mainz.de and the IFAC (International Federation of Accountants) policy statement on translation at www.ifac.org. Many more are being issued, among them a Chinese standard.

11. Applications to be sent to:
DIN CERTCO
Gesellschaft für Konformitätsbewertung mbH
Burggrafenstrasse 6
D-10787 Berlin

Recognition

Qualifications, titles, status and regulations

Introduction

One of the major issues discussed by translators the world over (with a few notable exceptions) is whether or not there should be a legally recognised professional status for translators so as to **regulate access to the profession** in order to ensure better quality for the clients by making sure candidates have the required skills. The debate is generally clouded by the fact that several issues (professional status, professional titles, regulated access to the use of the professional ‘title’) are rolled into one.

1. A professional status?

There is no doubt that, like all other professionals, translators would benefit by having a clearly defined professional status. In fact, in the vast majority of countries, translation is often seen as little more than glorified secretarial work and companies often do not even recognise as ‘translators’ employees who spend most of their working days translating under all kinds of rather unflattering denominations. One notable exception would be China, where translation needs are so huge and the translators so few – simply because there are few university students and fewer still attracted to translation – that translators have a lot of prestige and consideration.

In most countries, enhancement of the social (and economic) standing of both translation and translators is badly needed, but deep-seated attitudes are not easily changed and the profession itself is partly to blame, because solidarity doesn’t come easy: most of the time, it is a matter of ‘every man (and woman) for him/herself’ and translators only stick together when the situation is really bad for everyone.

All translators talk a lot of educating the customer. Professional bodies do their best to try and brighten up the image of translation and translators. But all too little or to no avail: there still exists no official status for translation and translators

and trying to get professional recognition and financial rewards for their skills and technical expertise is still basically a lone struggle.

Of course, there are such things as employee collective agreements, but, in the best of cases, they only apply to salaried translators. There are also well-recognised vocational courses and qualifications, but they are not sufficiently influential to improve the overall image of the profession. What is needed is some kind of solemn official international declaration confirming the highly specific technical character of translation as a pursuit, and as a profession. Alternatively, a definition of job profiles relating to translation and of the ways and means to access the translating professions is a necessary first step to make sure that such a category as translating professionals reaches international recognition.

2. Professional titles

For a professional title to be recognised, protected, and promoted, it is vital to state the minimum requirements for 'entitlement'. The model here could be Canada, where the procedure is as follows (excerpted from *User's Guide for Translation Services* at http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/TB_A3/user2_e.asp):

To become a certified member, a translator must belong to the provincial or territorial association of his or her choice and successfully pass a standardised certification examination that the CITC has authorized at the national level. In other words, a translator who, for example, wishes to become a member of the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta must take the same examination as the translator who wishes to become a member of the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Nova Scotia. This rigorous exam ensures that the candidates have the required professional skills to translate general texts accurately and in correct language. Translation certification examinations are held for specific language combinations. This means that a member of an association is certified, for example, for translation from English to French. If the member wants to be certified for translation from French to English or for some other combination of languages, he or she must pass as many exams as there are combinations of languages for which the member seeks certification.

Membership in a professional association entitles the member to the use of the title of certified translator. Some associations award certificates for specialized translators, but these are rare cases. The majority of the members are certified as generalists in one or more combinations of languages.

In recent years, three provincial associations – those of Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick – have obtained professional recognition from their

provincial governments so that their members can use the reserved title of certified translator. Most other associations receive a certain *de facto* recognition from the public authorities of their province or territory.

There are other countries where official certification actually does take place (Argentina, Sweden with its *auktoriserad* translators). There are also cases where ‘official translators’ are recognised to do the translating between two official languages (as with Basque in Spain or Maori in New Zealand). In most cases, only sworn translators are concerned by certification as they are the ones who will certify regulatory or official documents.

There are sworn translators in all countries, but the process of becoming a sworn translator varies considerably from one country to the next: in some countries one may become a sworn translator after actually taking an exam or an accreditation test; in others, it is just a matter of knowing a foreign language (preferably rare). In most countries, the ‘title’ of sworn translator (under whichever name applies locally) is very much sought after. Being the only official professional title, it conveys an image of true professionalism to potential clients and to the public at large. And the energy that many translators put into being ‘sworn’ goes a long way towards showing how much official recognition of a professional title based on serious guarantees as to professional competence is needed.

2.1 What title? What skills?

A professional title must guarantee that anyone setting up shop as a translator has the required skills, competences, and ethics.

Defining key skills and competences

If a professional title is to provide any guarantee as to the professional capacity of the holder, there must first of all be a clear and consensual definition of the competences, skills and aptitudes required of anyone wanting to use that title. The competences, skills and aptitudes required in standard translation practice can easily be defined by a joint committee made up of translators’ representatives, employers, work providers, training institutions and public authorities. In this case, ‘standard’ means common to all categories of translators.

This would in no way prevent anyone from going beyond the common denominator and allowing future translators to acquire additional specific skills and competences or refined work practices, as is already the case. The important thing is that the profession should agree on a common core which would be demanded of anyone wanting to call themselves ‘translators’. Should it prove

impossible to define a common core of translator skills and competences, there would be every reason to cast a doubt on the intellectual and economic relevance of the innumerable conferences, symposia, working groups, technical committees and so forth, which have spent years poring over the question of translator profiles and who might well, if it came to that, address the issue by a further raft of conferences, working groups and technical committees. . .

A consensual and dynamic definition of the required competences, skills and aptitudes is a pre-requisite for any effective action in this area. Once this has been achieved, the title can be delivered to those who have demonstrated that they have the said competences, skills and aptitudes.

2.2 Delivering the title

2.2.1 *Course validation procedures*

Given that university degrees are deemed to certify the graduates' knowledge and abilities in a given field, the title of translator would – in an ideal world – automatically be conferred on anyone holding a degree in translation. This would place the onus of responsibility on academics and academic institutions, and, where relevant, on the authorities that validate and 'certify' vocational courses.

This is an important and indeed crucial question in all those countries where translation courses (unfortunately not necessarily TRANSLATOR TRAINING COURSES) are recognised (on the basis of curricula freely decided by academics) by official committees that rarely have any real idea of the professional profiles required. Worse still, some courses actually do get approval despite very loud and clear indications from professional circles and especially potential employers or work providers that the curriculum is badly designed or even altogether irrelevant.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to remember that the existence of 'nationally recognised' or, so far, 'European' degrees does not imply in any way that the qualifications are uniform.¹² A postgraduate degree in translation awarded by one university in a given country may have very little (and sometimes almost nothing) in common with another postgraduate degree awarded by another university in the same country, be it from the point of view of admission requirements, course contents and organisation, learning environments, professional training and expected learning outcomes. Graduates may well be awarded degrees with the same or similar 'titles', but they will by no means necessarily have the same pro-

12. The EU's DGT has recently launched an initiative that should lead to the specification of basic requirements for European Masters in Translation. International bodies and institutions are following suit under the leadership of the United Nations translation services and CIUTI, aiming at creating special partnerships with chosen universities in order to get graduates with the required competence and skills.

fessional competence or aptitudes and the same level of employability. Hence the unofficial (and sometimes even official) 'league tables' through which employers rank the translation graduates nationally and internationally.

In theory, the array of competences, skills and aptitudes required of a practising translator should serve as the foundation and framework for curriculum development in any course or programme delivering qualifications in professional translation (whatever the specialisms involved). This would ensure that all translation graduates leaving university are fully aware of all the requirements and ethics of the profession, if only because the definition of the professional qualification should probably also insist on practical experience and work placements in the course of study.

It is all the more essential to work on the above objectives as nationally recognised qualifications will very soon be expected to comply with internationally agreed standards and will even in some cases be recognised as international professional diplomas or grades. Although international harmonisation of qualifications in terms of course names and contents should go a long way towards solving the issue of a translator status at the European level, and even beyond, it will by no means imply that all degree or postgraduate courses in translation are of equal value unless the procedures and metrics used to assess outcomes are the same.

2.2.2 *Recognising professional experience*

In many countries, people with professional experience can now be awarded university qualifications, and therefore professional titles, on the basis of that experience alone. This means that anyone with the required type and amount of experience in translating can in theory have that experience validated under such a system, and get the right to use the professional title of 'translator'.

Where such a system prevails, a qualification awarded under these conditions is deemed to be on a par with any other similar qualification awarded through more traditional channels.

2.2.3 *Assessing competence*

It would seem perfectly legitimate for anyone with a *bona fide* qualification in professional translation, whether awarded on the basis of a degree course or on the basis of prior professional experience, to lay claim to the title of translator. Yet the only really effective way of guaranteeing professional competence would be to check that the person actually does have all the skills and competences required. This would not require complicated procedures, but would simply mean checking that incompetent translators are *not* usurping the title – screening the incompetent performers out of the frame. The idea is not to carry out some sort of ruthless selection but to make sure that minimum guarantees are provided as to the quality of performance.

2.2.4 *Recognising professional experience and assessing professional competence: Professional title or academic qualification?*

Many may think that assessing professional competence and recognising professional experience amount to one and the same thing. This is indeed the case – in a sense – since it is impossible to recognise experience without assessing the person's competence. However, those who ask for their professional experience to be taken into account usually do so in order to be awarded an academic qualification and, in that case, things are not so simple: someone who has demonstrated that he or she can earn a living as a translator may still be quite incapable of meeting the requirements of academic qualifications in translation. That person may, for instance, have no knowledge or competence in areas such as terminology management, translation tools, computing, phraseology, project management, quality assurance, localisation, subtitling, which may be part of the course curriculum and thus expected learning outcomes. Such a person could therefore quite legitimately claim to use the 'title' of translator, but would not automatically be awarded the particular qualification.

2.3 Caution required

Some will of course object to the distinction between a 'title' and a 'qualification' in translation, on the following grounds:

1. This would give too much power to the universities and to any other establishment having the authority to deliver qualifications and run courses in translation (which may sometimes be language courses that just *include* a translation component). This is a fair objection, and it means that all institutions delivering qualifications in translation should comply with standard core requirements as regards the basic curriculum and skills, competence and aptitude assessment procedures – again, with the proviso that any institution would be free to **add** whatever options or specialisms they see fit.

Failing this, the qualifications 'market' will become a free for all where some institutions may be tempted to "*hard discount*" their degree awards. Anyone acquiring such a degree could then be left holding a worthless piece of paper, simply because no one in the industry would be willing to recognise it as a proof of competence.

Various organisations may also be tempted to introduce 'external' certification, on the lines of the professional examination organised by translators' associations in Canada or in a few other countries. Such exams can quite easily be designed to test the full range of competences, skills and aptitudes described above. All it would need is for an independent body, recognised by the industry and by the relevant authorities, to regularly organise professional certification

tests (as in Québec and Ontario), to have the tests marked anonymously by neutral examiners (with a dual marking system and an appeal procedure), and to award the title to anyone passing the test. Both this kind of test and the final exams taken in universities and other institutions could be based on criteria similar to those used in translation company or translation service recruitment tests.

2. Qualifications can be awarded at several levels, and a consensus will have to be sought as regards the level at which a professional title can be awarded or at which professional experience acquired by practising translators can be recognised. At least, the new 'Bologna' level two qualification ('masters' or whatever other denominations may be used) should eventually be recognised automatically by all the EU countries. If the DGT initiative carries the results it is expected to, this will confirm a *de facto* situation whereby qualifications in translation are almost all professionally oriented postgraduate qualifications. This would soon produce standard, clearly labelled qualifications and similar course contents and objectives and it would then only be a short step to deciding that equivalent qualifications (under one common name) could confer the professional 'title' and that the title would determine the translator's status and possibly access to the profession.
3. On the face of it, the third objection is more serious, *i.e.* that anyone already practising as a professional translator should be able to avail her/himself of the title. But this would mean that:
 - either the title should be awarded automatically to anyone able to prove recent practise of the profession for a given length of time – which would run counter to the idea that only an officially recognised qualification, awarded either on completion of a university degree course or on the basis of professional experience should allow people to use the title;
 - or the title has lost part of its significance;
 - or the system of awarding qualifications on the basis of professional experience has become obsolete.

In fact, the argument is only sustainable if there is a conjunction of a professional title and regulated access to the profession. In that case, it might be decided that access to the profession remains open for a given length of time to all, irrespective of qualifications, who can prove that they have already practiced translation on a professional basis.

2.4 What if such a 'title' came into being?

An incorrigible optimist might be founded in saying that, if the title became reality:

- a) the new responsibility that would go with awarding a professional title (and not simply an academic qualification) would naturally have a positive effect on the quality of the courses delivered, especially if it were backed up by a **national** or, better still, an international vetting process applied to the assessment of competences, skills and aptitudes.
- b) the possible recognition of professional experience should encourage academic institutions to offer appropriately tailored courses for people with work experience, especially if translation courses get to admit more and more practising professionals and technical experts from other fields. These would preferably be taught as distance courses.
- c) if such a title did exist and effectively enhanced the standing and status of the title holders, any practising translator – with the possible exception of those working in ‘captive’ and highly lucrative markets – would seek it. Let us not forget that many of those who actually do translation work in companies without having either the job title or the financial rewards that should go with the skills involved, are desperate to find ways to be recognised in their job.
- d) organisations and institutions that call on the services of translators would have to appoint or recruit certified and therefore fully ‘entitled’ professionals. In most cases, this would, among other things, clarify the conditions under which ‘official’ translators (and sometimes interpreters) are recruited and paid in quite a few countries.

Nothing would then prevent anyone (be it a company, an organisation, a professional association, an academic institution or whoever) from setting up a higher-grade certification level or subjecting translator-title holders to an additional screening process. And why not a two-tier system from the start, with a first-level title certifying competences, skills and aptitudes in **general and semi-specialised** translation, and with a second-level title for **specialist translation skills** (*i.e.* by domain, type, medium, or technique, etc.)?

3. Regulating access to the profession?

The question that really raises translators’ blood pressure is the issue of access to the profession: should it be restricted to those who hold a ‘diploma’ or ‘accreditation’ or ‘certification’ or be open to anyone who proves capable of practising the professional skills required? The debate has been raging for some time now, and the lines are clearly drawn. The arguments for and against regulation listed here have frequently been aired in a number of professional journals, on Web sites and translators’ mailing lists.

3.1 Against

Those who oppose any kind of regulated access to the translating professions usually base their position on the fact that most translators are deeply convinced that they are special cases and have a basically individualistic outlook on their profession. They draw on any number of the following arguments.

1. Translation is one of the very few remaining fields where people are free to be their own boss. If anyone can 'set up shop', then so be it and let the best man (or woman) win!
2. Regulating access to the profession would distort free competition.
3. The most important thing for the translator is the very special relationship and trust that he must establish with his clients. And this kind of relationship has nothing whatsoever to do with professional statuses. The translator should therefore be completely free to run his business without interference of any kind (and the red tape is bad enough as it is!).
4. Defining conditions of access to the profession and a professional status would rapidly lead on to a standard definition of services and translation tariffs, as in regulated health service professions, whereas in fact translators and doctors, for instance, have little in common as regards their role in society and it would therefore be stupid to treat them alike.
5. Any freelance translator's ambition is to make a living. The going is often tough at first and it is only fair that freelancers should be free to reap the full benefits once they have built up a reputation and a client portfolio. Regulations might prevent them from catching up.
6. Translators are not interested in regulatory frameworks: all that matters, irrespective of background and personal motives, is doing a good job with genuine respect for professional ethics
7. Regulating access would mean reducing the current diversity of origin which is the hallmark of a dynamic profession.
8. A regulatory framework would be designed to protect a bunch of cosseted university graduates, 'trained' by academics in their ivory towers, as opposed to self-taught translators whose skills and competences are founded on their expertise and experience in a technical field (in the broad sense of the word). Far better to leave the doors wide open and to let the free market take care of (natural) selection.
9. Translators cannot be 'trained': they emerge by a natural process. This is what they have done in the past and this is what they should keep doing. Besides, it should take only a few weeks to master translation techniques. Long university courses are only needed if you get it into your head to 'train' translators from scratch, especially those with a 'languages-and-literature' background. Anyway, the average standard of the work done by a 'trained' translator is poor

and in any case no better (in fact often significantly worse) than that done by a self-taught translator.

10. All you need to do to get rid of unfair competition is to apply existing regulations and make sure that anyone practising translation on a regular basis pays all due contributions and taxes. Force the cheaters to comply with existing regulations and let the others get on with the job.
11. It is up to employers in companies and translation services and purchasing managers to select the most able applicants or the most competitive sub-contractors, in the knowledge that the best man (or woman) will always come out on top.
12. In a global marketplace where work providers can shop around without any restriction, no regulation or legislation or statute can have the slightest effect on the translation markets or on the quality of translations. Defining a restrictive translator status in a given country would amount to lumbering the translators from that country with a severe handicap in the face of competition from unregulated countries.

3.2 For

Those who argue in favour of some kind of regulated access to the profession also do so for a variety of reasons.

1. They want to introduce some degree of assurance that every practising translator will meet at least minimum standards of professional competence by ensuring that all translators are aware of what is at stake for the profession and what translation implies, and that they can guarantee satisfactory quality whatever the circumstances, while complying strictly with the code of professional ethics.
2. They implicitly want to establish a clear distinction between (1) those who have demonstrated that they have all the necessary professional qualities to practise as translators (irrespective of whether they have university qualifications or not) and (2) those who were not awarded the official title or who have no interest in claiming it.
3. They want to afford some protection to translators, especially the most vulnerable: *e.g.* those who only have access to the most fragmented, least lucrative, geographically isolated markets, or more simply the beginners in the profession.
4. They would like to help to enhance the image of the profession and get rid of some of the 'outlaws', even though the latter would still survive on the fringes but would then be clearly shown up for what they are.

5. They really hope this would force employers – and especially organisations – to use clear quality criteria when recruiting new staff.
6. They want some measure of market protection and it is no surprise to see that the calls for official recognition of the translation profession usually grow louder when market conditions (in terms of volume and in terms of tariffs) begin to deteriorate and translators start to find it hard to earn a decent living after contributions and taxes.
7. Above all, they think there is no other viable way to impose translation quality standards such that any person can find the information or documentation they need in a given language that is (a) at least comprehensible and (b) effective for the purpose it was designed for. The qualification process would be such that every translator would meet minimum quality standards and adhere to a strict ethical code. This should be the real goal of any certification process – short of getting official international backing for an official status. And it should alleviate the tendency of the markets to give priority to the lowest bidder.
8. A comprehensive picture should also include the disquiet of those who fear the longer term effects of the growing number of translator training courses being set up all over the world, and especially in rather low or very low cost countries which could attract off-shore businesses (such as Asia, the Central and Eastern European countries, Brazil for Portuguese, the Spanish-speaking Americas and, to a lesser extent, Ireland, Portugal, Italy, etc.). And there is another fundamental question: what will happen anyway once the market for some language pairs and/or domains is flooded with well qualified and well trained translators? Will anyone dare suggest that quotas or even a moratorium might be in order?

3.3 So what *is* the answer?

Despite what many translators think, translating is not a totally unregulated profession everywhere. As we said earlier, countries as far apart and as different as Canada (in Quebec, Ontario and New-Brunswick), Argentina, Denmark and Norway, award translators a legal status and access to the profession is subject to professional approval (a process whereby a local union of professional translators recognise that new entrants to the profession have all the necessary skills and competences).

In most countries, practising as a translator implies at least some form of registration and a number of clearly defined tax and social security obligations. If every work provider bothered to ask translators for their self-employed registration number where regulations make such registration mandatory, unfair compe-

tition would very quickly disappear, though this would still not necessarily solve the problem of poor quality work.

When all is said and done, common sense could solve the problem. The situation might be as follows:

- in any case, **access to the practice of translation on a professional basis** would require full compliance with all applicable tax and social security obligations;
- the title of **professional translator** would be awarded to those graduating from a university course or on the basis of prior professional experience, according to standard, internationally recognised procedures;
- those translators who feel that the title is important because this would guarantee their competence and the quality of their work would seek to become ‘**state registered**’ or **chartered translators**.

The system could be implemented smoothly and fairly, even in the context of globalisation, without resorting to further regulations or restrictions. There would just remain one thing to be done: all those in favour of consumer protection or protecting work providers’ interests should logically be in favour of introducing a translating aptitude test for anyone wanting to practice translation professionally. This kind of test would simply be designed to weed out the budding translators who are clearly unable to meet certain minimum quality criteria (at least temporarily, as the test could obviously be re-taken at regular intervals).

Whichever way you look at the issue, therefore, there does seem to be an urgent need to restrict the use of the professional title of translator on the basis of professional competence and compliance with a strict ethical code. And any such restrictions must be universally accepted and applied, just as the fight for decent remuneration levels must be extended to translators all over the world. Wherever they live and wherever they practise, all translators have a duty to fight simultaneously for better quality *and* for higher tariffs. Simply because, like it or not, translators offering the same language combination are now in the same boat if they have access to the same markets and can be reached by the same work providers. Everyone knows that unrestricted global markets can lead to low-cost prevailing over quality. Hence the need for quality-based standards, which could then be used to get fairer tariffs for everyone and reduce market distortion. If the translation profession remains a free-for-all, it will mean lower earnings for everyone in the long run, both at national and international level. It will also mean lower quality, because even good translators will no longer be able to ‘afford’ the luxury of quality assurance if they want to earn a decent living, or alternatively, because earnings will have fallen to such depths that the best translators will simply have left the profession and the best students will not be attracted to it.

Of course, no one will admit to their livelihood being on the line. Yet anyone who spends a bit of time browsing the Web can find translators willing to work for

1 (yes, one!) euro cent a word or even less. And these sometimes are translators who are every bit as professional and effective as other translators working with the same language combinations who have to charge more than ten times that rate just to ‘make ends meet’...

4. The floodgates are opening

In the short to medium term, translation markets are likely to be flooded with hordes of untrained and self-taught translators. Those who think they are not threatened on the grounds that they can offer superior quality (you bet!) and that ‘*quality always wins through*’ may then be left high and dry because ‘quality’ is on the way to becoming readily available to anyone having ‘*done languages*’ or having some kind of expertise in any domain.

The fact that resources of every kind are now universally and immediately available is already having a positive impact on overall quality. To take but one example, the universal availability of resources has had a noticeable effect on the average quality of translations done in real-life conditions by applicants taking selective entry tests for graduate or postgraduate translator training courses. The results achieved by those coming from backgrounds where they have received no specific training in translation techniques have improved quite dramatically over the past few years.

This is not surprising, given that the basic resources required for (1) understanding whatever is up for translation – *i.e.* the corpora of documents and materials in the source language – and (2) formulating the translation – *i.e.* the corpora of documents, materials and resources in the target language – have become available at a click of the mouse.

The situation obviously differs according to the language combination, but the wealth of translation literature and resources now available (among which no end of terminological databases and knowledge bases) is a boon for the amateur translator. Some might quite rightly object that having access to the right material does not necessarily make everyone a translator. True, but work providers, and the Internet, and ISO, and CEN *et al.*, are seeing to that.

First, work providers have grown into the habit of defining specifications and, in some well-publicised cases, actually telling the translators what to do at every juncture. Such guidelines can steady the hand of anyone who is not too sure about how to go about translating.

Then the resources on the Web. Anyone actually wanting to get information on how to translate will get that information in the guise of dedicated portals, full-blown translation courses, sites that are precisely dedicated to analysing the question of quality in translation, avoiding the common pitfalls and offering

the right procedures, plus any translation company or agency site where “our procedures” are described at full length. This in itself is perfectly legitimate, but the implications are considerable in terms of self-tuition.

Lastly, CEN and other standards. Already, anyone who feels so inclined can check out the appropriate quality assurance procedures for translation in any number of published quality standards and dozens of books on the subject. Standards, after all, are designed to tell professionals what to do to achieve perfection in their professional practice. Not that standards should not be set-up, but the implications, again, are considerable.

Finding the right information no longer requires specific know-how, skills and experience. Anyone so willing can gain **free** access (in every sense of the word) to all the know-how, technical data, terminological and phraseological resources and other information needed to carry out translations – a safe bet being that word-processor based translation memory management systems and huge translation memories made available to the general public are just round the corner. This means that anyone now has the potential to translate far faster and with better results than only four or five years ago. And everyone can really **train** to be a translator *via* the Internet or, at least, get information on how to train. The irony of it is that it is the professionals who are collectively responsible for helping the amateurs get a foothold in the industry. All the barriers which used to make access to the resources and procedures and strategies more difficult for people outside the profession and training institutions have now been lifted. Only the tools and technologies still remain beyond the reach of the enlightened amateur, but for how long? And this in itself matters little since any operation that requires using special tools and technologies inevitably becomes fully automated in a matter of months or years.

Maybe the last barrier is that of being able to find clients (until even that becomes easy over the Internet) and knowing how to ‘set up shop’ (but there again, the answer is on the ‘Net’).

The whole point is that translators must be aware that they are in a constant struggle to keep one step ahead of the field, which means:

- seeking out lucrative niche markets in front of the pack,
- acquiring ever more skills and knowledge through more extensive training and longer years at university or in work placements,

It is interesting, in this respect, to see that some Spanish institutions have recently introduced postgraduate courses in translation – sorry: localisation – that are open to students who have already completed a five-year university course.

- becoming a ‘leading edge’ specialist, at home with all kinds of sophisticated IT software, capable of updating the work station, managing projects and teams

of translators, proof-reading and revising, and undertaking any of the many translation-related tasks but not so much ‘just translation’.

The question, which we already touched upon, will soon be: what will extra quality mean from a commercial point of view once it becomes obvious that reasonable quality has become universal (or nearly so). And what will happen if universities keep churning out literally thousands of translators a year? The translator’s complaint used to be that just about anyone could set-up shop without having to offer the slightest guarantee as to quality. It may soon turn out to be that those thousands of anyones setting up shop are actually better informed, better qualified and better trained than many practising translators because the skills and knowledge that used to make the difference have become commonplace and because they have been taught new skills and knowledge. Whatever their backgrounds, these new translators will most certainly squeeze out the shaky operators even among those who think they belong there and, in any case, a surfeit of translators on the supply side will make the demand side even more demanding (and less generous). Pessimists would say this is already the case today.

So, the motto is: keep moving ahead, to even newer, narrower fields of specialisation. Or become a reviser. Or quit translating and go into (quality, project, vendor, client, or resource) management or consultancy.

SECTION V

Evolutions and revolutions

From P & P to WS & ATT

From pen and paper to workstation and assisted-translation tools

The universal revolution in translating is the one that has taken translators from a pen and paper environment to a world of workstations and CAT tools that are getting ever more sophisticated, turning the translator into someone much like an airplane pilot, connected to the outside world by an amazing variety of tools designed to help find information, communicate with others and carry out all the different tasks required.

1. Basic hardware equipment

The translator's workstation starts with a top-of-the-range computer, which needs to be changed every two years, on average, to keep up with technological advances (or marketing tricks?) and software requirements.

Today, the central processing unit is likely to be a PC (for the simple reason that most translation tools are PC compatible), equipped with a dual processor if the translator uses voice recognition tools (one of the processors being devoted to that task) and with two hard disks, one for the software applications and one for the data. The translator's multimedia applications require Maximum CPU clock frequency and RAM size.

Peripherals usually include:

- a scanner, to produce digital copies of the source materials, if the client has only sent a paper copy,
- a fast, high-definition colour printer – because colour is now standard in most documents, because it enhances the subjective quality of the translated version, also because it literally represents a bonus in terms of image. The printer will be used to print out 'distributable' copies of the translated material for in-house or external clients who are not themselves equipped with adequate printing resources,

- an external back-up device to save all the work files and data – because reliable archives are absolutely vital for translators, who therefore will inevitably be looking for the most permanent and efficient storage media,
- a high quality microphone (for use with voice recognition software),
- loud-speakers and/or a top-of-the-range headset (for use for transcriptions in multimedia translation or subtitling for example),
- any multimedia equipment required for specific types of source materials (digital camera, digital video-recorder, webcam, etc.).

One of the most crucial requirements is an Internet connection. Nowadays, this is almost inevitably broadband (ADSL for instance), offering high speed at relatively low cost. Internet access is vital for today's translator. The Internet is a kind of umbilical cord, providing the translator with 'life-sustaining' information on the markets, on source material subject matter, on existing resources, or on changing hardware and software solutions, while enabling the translator to keep in touch with clients and potential informers alike. Quite a few translators have two separate Internet Service Providers, simply because any disruption can have dire consequences.

2. Basic functions

The translator's workstation is designed to let him:

- generate and manage files,
- save, copy, merge and archive translations, and retrieve them instantly,
- store data and files,
- transfer and exchange files and data, receive the files to be translated and forward the translated material,
- network with other users (*via* intranets or *via* the Internet),
- digitise documents for partly or fully automated processing,
- access on-line documentation instantaneously and without limitation,
- use e-mail,
- implement various software applications designed to facilitate ancillary operations such as client data base or file management, accounting procedures, invoicing, etc.
- translate, proofread, revise, print, etc.

3. Text processing and desktop publishing

As far as translators are concerned, IT is first and foremost about the use of word processing and desktop publishing applications. To all intents and purposes, this type of software has more radically changed professional practice than any dedicated translation software, and new capabilities are being developed all the time.

The reasons why word processing and desktop publishing have had such an impact on the profession are well known.

- Dealing mainly with text, translators welcome any development designed to speed up word-processing and improve its efficiency.
- Word processors and desktop publishing applications have made life considerably easier for translators, by:
 - improving typing speeds,
 - doing away with the nightmarish task of having to correct typed pages or, worse still, having to type out whole pages again,
 - allowing ‘cut and paste’ type changes,
 - allowing text changes and rewriting to be carried out as an ongoing process.
- Word processors and desktop publishing applications have opened up new translation markets, because the flexibility that word processing offers has had an exponential effect on the volumes of documentation produced, and, therefore, on the volumes that need to be translated.
- Word processors and desktop publishing applications have opened up new markets by enabling translators to offer new types of services, such as:
 - document assembly and layout,
 - desktop publishing,
 - printing,
 - creation of dictionaries,
 - quick updates,
 - document integration.
- Word processors and desktop publishing applications have improved working conditions insofar as the translator now generally receives a ready-to-use digital version of the source material instead of a badly printed or sometimes barely legible copy or faxed version of the material, as often used to be the case.
- Word processors and desktop publishing applications improve the quality of the translators’ work by allowing them to provide professionally laid out, perfectly readable translated texts, which can easily and readily be adjusted to the client’s requirements *via* the style sheets.

- Word processors and desktop publishing applications give the translators end-to-end control over the documentation production chain by allowing them to insert screen captures, graphics, digital images or video sequences, to design pictograms, implement full graphic and multimedia integration, carry out automatic formatting, draw graphs, and take care of many other miscellaneous tasks which the translator is now expected to carry out or wishes to carry out as a way of enhancing the service provided – and the cheque that goes with it.
- Even more importantly, word processors and desk-top publishing applications have brought about considerable increases in the translator's productivity by allowing translators to re-write, type over the source text so as to keep the original style and format (tags), compare versions, modify a translation in mid-sentence after a change in tack, automatically or semi-automatically search and replace items, implement corrections, and much more. Word processing has undoubtedly at least doubled or trebled translator productivity since the days of the typewriter. We must remember that the only way a translator could improve productivity in the pre-IT days was by dictating the translation, which would then be typed out by a specially trained typist before being proof-read and corrected by the translator. Incidentally, the first 'victims' in the IT revolution in the world of translation were the typists working in, or for, language services.
- Word processors also have revolutionized revision, whether for professional purposes (by making it possible to type over the changes so these can be tracked by the translator) or pedagogical purposes (by making it possible to insert unrestricted commentaries).

Yet there is still room for improvement: it is generally estimated that translators only use 30 to 40% of the word processor's capacity on average and that, given a few days of training, they would easily be able to exploit the potential more to the full, for instance by programming macro commands to automate certain tasks. But this is another story.

4. Web site editing/creation software

Given the increase in Web site localisation, all translators would be well-advised to learn how to use Web editors and learn a few things about HTML, XML, XSL and the rest. Being able to 'get into the code' is certainly an advantage marketwise. At the same time, the more advanced way of getting translated contents disseminated is, of course, Web site creation (with or without localisation). No wonder more and more translators are including Web site creation in the services they offer and the standard workstation is increasingly becoming loaded with all kinds of Web

editors [including graphics editors] to process and put content online. Anyone wishing to keep up with Web editing must constantly be on the lookout for new Web tools.

5. Translator tools/tools for translation

Translators now use a number of software tools specifically designed to speed up or improve the translation process. These include:

- dedicated resources,
- search engines and portals,
- terminology management and phraseology extraction software,
- ‘translation memory systems’ designed to set up, manage and exploit so called ‘translation memories’,
- specialist software (*e.g.* for subtitling, Web site cloning, videogame localisation or software localisation),
- voice recognition or voice synthesis software,
- translation management software (mostly for quality control),
- translation flow management software (workflow),
- translation systems requiring some degree of human intervention, given that any automatic translation system requires human assistance in the sense that someone has to feed in and update the algorithms and the dictionaries.

5.1 Dedicated resources or ‘passive aids’ to translation

Dedicated resources or ‘passive aids’ to translation consist of various **documentation resources** which the translators have at their immediate disposal. These may include:

- documentation specifically designed for translators,
- documentation available *via* a number of different media (CD-ROMs, Internet, intranets, mass storage devices, or other media),
- documentation the translators can access without necessarily being able to use the information directly in the translation.

Dedicated **translation resources** include:

- terminology data bases such as Le Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique, IATE, Lexpro-CD Databank, and many others,
- translator information data bases and portals,
- glossaries accessible *via* the Web,
- online forums and specialist mailing lists.

Translators are also quite good at ‘colonizing’ specialist forums, where domain specialists discuss their own matters. These can in effect be a source of specialist information, and, in some cases, a way of finding the informer needed to answer a specific query. Unfortunately many such forums are password-protected.

As regards **terminology resources**, the Web has led to major changes, in that:

- translators can access them directly *via* their work stations;
- available resources grow exponentially;
- the number of publicly accessible Web sites that list and index known terminology resources is also growing exponentially;
- a growing number of increasingly efficient search engines are available to find useful information – with a special mention for Google, which has given rise to a whole range of ‘googlisms’, e.g. ‘to google’, ‘to re-google’, ‘to ‘back-google’ or ‘to cross-google’, meaning to look up a term on the Web, to do a second search, to do a reverse search, and to check out a guess.

At the same time, one can regret that there is no longer any guarantee that the available terminology resources are reliable, as most of them – with the notable exception of monolingual glossaries created by professional organisations – are no longer vetted by scientific or editorial committees.

Translator **forums and mailing lists** have also been developing over the past few years.

Mailing lists are a simple way of organising electronic mail so that all the subscribers to the list receive any questions from, and answers to, any other member of the list. All subscribers are free to leave or (re)join the list at any time. Such lists can be an extraordinarily useful tool for translators who need an immediate answer to an urgent question. Experience shows that questions addressed to professional mailing lists never go unanswered. The list becomes a kind of virtual professional ‘club’, making freelance translators feel less isolated and gaining a life of its own, according to the ebb and flow of questions and answers. The issues discussed go far beyond simple questions of terminology, even though the latter account for a large part of the online exchanges. The effect of these lists is such nowadays that we could speak about S.A.T. or ‘*subscriber-assisted translation*’. Mailing lists definitely deserve to be included among ‘aids to translation’ under the name of ‘*Mutual assistance tools*’.

Generally, subscribers to discussion lists:

- provide permanent assistance in solving terminology problems (a kind of terminological help line that translators call routinely when they do not understand a text segment or cannot find the name for something or are not quite sure about their translation);
- occasionally engage in in-depth analyses of terminological or linguistic issues;

- provide systematic assistance and advice in the use of translation tools;
- regularly discuss questions relating to tariffs and content of the service provided to clients;
- launch or revive major discussions on perennial questions such as punctuation, the use of upper case letters, style, etc.;
- discuss issues relating to translator status;
- exchange information on notoriously unreliable clients (*Payment Practices* is a dedicated list that deals exclusively with bad payment practice);
- discuss what attitude freelance female translators should adopt vis-à-vis their clients when taking maternity leave;
- keep each other informed of their travel arrangements, and organise informal but quite festive meetings;
- create an on-line portrait gallery to be able to put faces on the e-mail addresses;
- discuss a wide range of technical questions, such as computer platforms, equipment (backup systems), software (voice recognition applications), Internet access providers, etc.;
- compare the respective merits of different search engines;
- pass on to fellow subscribers extra work that they themselves are unable to carry out;
- and much more.

All discussion lists eventually create some kind of virtual extended family. Messages from subscribers who suddenly feel lonely late at night, or stressed out by impossible-to-meet deadlines or furious over software bugs or outrageous client behaviour, prompt messages of solace and support in return. The subscribers come to represent a living, closely-knit community, and in cases where a member is in dire trouble, everyone comes together to provide psychological, moral and even financial support, which in some cases has gone as far as helping a subscriber keep clients which he might otherwise have lost due to protracted illness. Friendship is no less supportive for being expressed *via* cyberspace. At the same time, as in any other community, there is also indignation, violent contradiction, passionate debate and even outrage at times – usually starting from some trivial linguistic question.

There are now many such lists for translators or on the subject of translation. Most of them are restricted or ‘moderated’ lists:

- **Restricted lists**, by definition are not accessible to all and sundry. Many of the mailing lists for translators have been set up and are managed by professional associations, and are, for obvious reasons, open to members only.
- **Moderated** (From the word moderator = chairman and referee in a debate) or ‘regulated’ lists are supervised by a kind of editor-in-chief, who receives all the messages sent to the list, sorts them out, sometimes synthesises them

and forwards them on the list. The moderator can thus vet certain requests or offers and filter some of the information on the list in order to avoid unwanted messages.

Discussion groups/ mailing lists on translation can be accessed from [www://groups.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) (go through the usual queries) or by contacting the translators' association in the country of reference (addresses from www.fit-ift.org/en/news-en.php/members) or by asking Yahoo, Alta Vista, Google, Copernic, etc.

5.2 Search engines, directories, blogs and portals

Search engines, directories and portals are particularly useful tools for any translator in her/his quest for focused information in specific fields.

Search engines are software applications designed to seek out in previously indexed Web pages information relating to the keywords that the translator (or anyone else) has defined. The search engine returns as 'hits' the titles or identification and URLs for the relevant sites. The way the queries are entered or the strategies used to narrow down the search may vary from one engine to the next, and this makes it highly advisable to always start by reading the user guide and by doing a little test on a number of set keywords.

Another way of approaching this kind of search is to use a 'meta-search engine', *i.e.* an application which itself uses several different search engines to scan the Web before compiling the results. So far, the translators' favourite search engine is Google at <http://www.google.com>.

There are quite a number of 'portals' and blogs dedicated to professional translation. These usually offer various resources and services: glossaries, pre-defined links to online glossaries, a translator data base where translators can enter their details (working languages, specialisms and particular skills) in the hope that it will catch the eye of a work provider on the look-out for translators, a data base with translation contracts put out to tender (a brokerage system which helps keep the portal afloat), and various kinds of information and advice for translators or even, in many cases, an online magazine [**keywords:** *translation exchange, translation forum, translators' forum, translation blog*].

5.3 Terminology and phraseology management software

Terminology management software refers to applications designed to process the terminology required for an ongoing translation or the client's in-house glossaries. These are to be distinguished from full-blown database management systems that allow users to create generic or specialised terminology databases.

Terminology management and phraseology extraction applications can be used to:

- import the appropriate terms into the translation (*i.e.* by extracting terms from terminology bases),
- extract useful phraseology from target language corpora.

Terms can be imported in either automatic mode (without human intervention) or semi-automatic mode (with the translator selecting the most appropriate term by accepting or rejecting what the system suggests). So called terminology management systems often simply interface terminology management applications or ‘automatic dictionaries’ with a word processor. The simplest one is a macro command that extracts the terminology from a table that the translator has created with all the terminology to be used in the translation and integrates it into the material for translation.

Phraseology extraction applications can be used on a set of documents in the target language relating to the subject matter dealt with in the source material and found *via* the Internet. The extraction software identifies all the occurrences of keywords in the phrases the translator is looking for, and then displays them with their context. The translator can then use this phraseology ‘bank’ to find appropriate phrases for the ongoing translation. For instance, the translator will ask to see all the collocations and phraseological combinations of the term *bandwidth* in the digital corpus, and will then be able to choose the most appropriate one in the given context. Acrobat ReaderTM6.0 and upwards unquestionably qualifies as a decent phraseology extractor from PDF files.

Dictionary creation software enables the translator to produce dictionaries for his clients, whenever this is required. Dictionaries may be created using a word processor, a spreadsheet application or a data base management system (either commercially available or purpose-built). These applications can be considered as ‘translator assistance devices’ insofar as they help translators perform dictionary creation more speedily and more efficiently.

5.4 Translation memory management systems

A translation memory (also known as a ‘bi-text’) is a file consisting of a table of matches between the segments of two texts, one of which is the translation of the other. In other words, a translation memory is a table matching discourse segments in two different languages. The matches are generally, but not necessarily, based on whole sentences. Depending on the system, set phrases, paragraphs, sections or even whole chapters may also be segmented and matched. Segments which are deemed to be ‘equivalent’ (in that they ‘match’) can then be substituted for each other whenever one of them appears in a document being translated

(particularly when the translation on hand concerns an updated version of an existing document).

Any segment in a new text which appears in an existing match table will be spotted, and translated as in that table. The user is therefore given the impression that the system ‘remembers’ that the segment has already been translated though the term bi-text would seem more appropriate to describe the actual content and form of the memory.

The translation memory system requires three separate software applications:

- an aligner, to create the memory files,
- a format and tag management system,
- a translation memory management system.

5.4.1 *Aligners*

Aligners are software applications which can ‘align’ a source text and its translation, by identifying ‘matching’ segments in both texts, which will then form the basis for the tables that make up the translation ‘memory’.

The aligner ‘aligns’ or establishes an equivalence between segments deemed to have the same meaning in two different languages, therefore requiring a digital version of both the source and the target text. The alignment can also be automated, with the translator checking and validating the memory. Each ‘bi-text’ (*i.e.* the source text and its translation) is then archived and indexed for future use (*e.g.* by client name, product or process name, file code, domain, or any other relevant indicator). An aligner can be used to rapidly build up a stock of translation memories and get a return on the quite significant investment that a translation memory system requires.

Nowadays, the word ‘aligner’ can also refer to whoever in the department or company is in charge of creating translation memories by processing existing translations along with their sources. This is often a task given over to students on translation courses during their work placement. The task is actually more interesting and useful from a training point of view than is usually thought, because it forces the operator to check the matches produced by the system, therefore providing an opportunity to learn by example.

As new translations proceed, translators generate new memories or expand existing ones because, the moment the system comes in operation, translating amounts to systematically declaring matches between segments in the source material and the translated material. The inventory of translation memories therefore increases every time a translator produces a new translation, because, as we said, this automatically adds to the memory. The stock will increase all the more rapidly if there are a large number of translators using the same

system *via* a network (an intranet). The system's efficiency and profitability increases in line with the repetitive nature of the documents to be translated.

A common standard for translation memories has now been developed as TMX to allow translation memories created under different applications and existing or future TM management systems to become compatible.

The probability is that translation memories shall soon be offered for sale. Those will apply to stereotyped documents (contracts), stereotyped operations (assembly and disassembly of machines, maintenance operations, sequences of operations), and sometimes even be domain-specific.

Major work providers and major service providers in the translation business have created or assembled huge translation memories which are maintained and amplified on an ongoing basis. All their employees and subcontractors access, use, and complement or update those memories – just like they used to access, use, and complement dictionaries. TMs (translation memories) are dictionaries of a kind and will necessarily, like any other dictionary, find their way onto the market.

There should therefore shortly emerge a new business segment and job profile having to do with translation memory creation (not to be confused with the design and development of translation memory systems) starting with general memories relating to clearly defined areas (translation of balance sheets, contracts, operating instructions, etc.) These will automatically translate the core sections of each type of document, and each translator will add his own customized tables according to the specificities of his own materials.

5.4.2 *Format and tag management applications*

Like any other automatic processing system, translation memories are likely to generate formatting and tagging problems.

Some formats may need to be converted before the translation can take place (but most systems accommodate a wide variety of formats) and, whenever relevant, format tags or other kinds of tags have to be preserved in the source text. In the worst case scenario, the file has to be converted for translation into a format the application can recognise, and then converted back into the format required by the client once it has been processed.

In the most recent translation memory management systems, the user is not even aware of the pre-translation processing or conversions as these are carried out automatically.

5.4.3 *Translation memory management systems*

Translation memory management systems (which exploit existing memories and create new ones every time a new translation is carried out) work, in fact, very much like word processing applications.

As the translator moves through the translation, the application identifies those segments of the document that are in the translation memory, picks up the 'translation' from that same translation memory, and integrates it directly into the translation, or asks the translator to confirm.

Technically, this means that the application compares 'significant' character chains in the source text with the segments in the source language recorded in the memory, and, if such segments are found, restores the recorded translation in the target language – 'significant' means they have been segmented according to pre-determined parameters, not that they are necessarily 'meaningful'. The translation memory system either suggests perfect 'matches' (*i.e.* segments in the B language that are exactly equivalent to segments in the A language) or 'fuzzy' matches (*i.e.* memory segments which only partly correspond to source text segments). The operator can increase the efficiency of the system by setting match thresholds (a 75% match, for instance, means that 75% of the two character chains are identical). As this type of application does not make use of artificial intelligence, the match is based on a degree of coincidence between the character chains in the text to be translated and those in the translation memory, not on semantic criteria.

The translation memory systems currently available on the market are incapable of recognising either that two different segments in the same language convey the same meaning, or that two morphologically identical character chains convey different meanings. All they can do is blindly exploit segments that have been declared and confirmed as equivalent in meaning. This means that such equivalences should normally be carefully checked, especially where recurrence is high, because the match tables may contain glaring errors. Many conscientious translation service providers have undertaken extensive **revision** of all the phraseology contained in their existing translations. The expansion of translation memories should therefore rapidly lead to the recognition of phraseology as a vital part of translation studies – 'phraseology' being considered here both as (a) the study of discourse and enunciation stereotypes (b) the sets of phrases and formulations specific to a particular speaker, type of document, discourse, professional field, etc.

What must be borne in mind is that:

- translation memory management systems are only worth the expenditure of time (and money) if they have extensive memories to draw upon. Empty memories are no use and some kind of initial investment in terms of text alignment is mandatory unless one is prepared to start building from scratch.
- translation memory systems are useful with repetitive materials – either single documents containing a large number of recurrent phrases or paragraphs, or sets or series of documents that are largely identical. They were originally used for updating successive versions of product documentation or translating

different documents delivered with one same product. The first ones were developed by major companies with large-scale translation needs. Today, all major companies with significant translation needs tend to have their own translation memories, which they then require their translators to use.

Given that (a) a large part of the product documentation needing to be translated is in the IT area and that (b) such documentation has been designed and disseminated in electronic format, it is no surprise that translation memory management systems have been specifically designed to help with the translation (localisation) of Web pages, software packages, video games, and the like.

It must finally be mentioned that machine translation applications are now being sold as part of a translation memory system package (cf. *Transcend*TM, included with *Star Transit*TM) and that TM management systems are sold under the name of CAT (Computer-assisted translation) tools.

The leading TM brands are SDL TradosTM, Star TransitTM, SimilisTM, DéjàVuTM, WordfastTM, CatalystTM (for localisation), IBM's Translation ManagerTM, Trans Suite 2000TM, MetaTaxisTM, TR-AidTM, PasoloTM, MnemeTM by Logos, MaestroTM, by Lionbridge, OmegaT (free, Java), MultiTransTM, ACROSSTM.

5.5 Specialist software

Specialist software is now rapidly becoming an integral part of the translator's everyday environment. This includes both comprehensive software packages and specific applications designed for one or several particular tasks.

5.5.1 Comprehensive software packages

Specialist software packages are now available for many forms of special-purpose translation, notably in areas such as subtitling (e.g. Monal Virtual by LVT) or software localisation (e.g. Locale, Robohelp, Catalyst, Locstudio). Such tools are designed to allow the user to carry out all of the necessary operations smoothly and comfortably. Failing this, the translator would have to carry out manually the somewhat complex and tricky processes of, say, disassembling and re-assembling the medium, and carrying out the functional qualification tests.

Such packages can free the translator from the constraints of having to rely on other specialists, and in particular the IT specialists who had to come in to process the material before and after the translation phase proper.

Subtitling packages, for instance, allow the translator to carry out a number of automatic or semi-automatic operations on an ordinary workstation. The translator can now:

- detect segments and time-codes,
- do all necessary tagging,

- generate the sub-titles,
- run simulations,
- and even actually burn the sub-titles.

Localisation packages can be used on that same workstation to:

- protect (or ‘freeze’) formats and tags,
- implement all the necessary conversions,
- extract items calling for special treatment (*e.g.* menus and menu options),
- call up the contents of existing translation memories,
- carry out the translation, and integrate it,
- carry out any back any conversions or compiling which may be required,
- implement qualifying tests for the translated version (including homogeneity testing and consistency checks).

5.5.2 *Dedicated software applications*

Many applications are used to carry out specific functions, such as text tagging, file management, spell-checking, revision, editing, etc. Applications such as these are usually trying to cash in on the growing and relatively lucrative translation market. Any function likely to generate added value is therefore liable to be automated or semi-automated at some stage, particularly if the application is expected to reach a market extending beyond the circle of language professionals. This is a perfect illustration of the reversal of traditional marketing principles, whereby a generic product designed for the general public was then adapted to specialist uses, including the translation market. It has now become clear that a return on investment can be generated by specialist software tools, in the knowledge that they usually find their way to much wider markets and, hopefully, to the public at large.

5.6 Voice recognition software

Voice recognition systems (or dictation systems as they are sometimes called), were obviously not specifically designed for translators. As would seem obvious to anyone who has ever walked into a hospital, they were originally designed for the medical profession. They will no doubt be instrumental in bringing about the third major revolution in translation practice after word processing and translation memories. If it were not for the fact that they require very high speed CPU clocks and large RAM capacity, they would already be far more widely used. The efficiency of the system is in fact quite spectacular. More important still, such systems can generate significant productivity gains and free the translator from the slavery of the keyboard and the computer screen. That revolution is on the march right now.

From the translator's point of view, voice recognition amounts to a dictation system, with the translator dictating translations just as a company director used to dictate letters or a doctor reports. The system works on a probabilistic basis, processing extended phonemic sequences and calculating the most probable corresponding word forms. The translator dictates at (slightly lower than) normal speed, using a microphone. With a short time lag, the system then displays the dictated text, and the translator can dictate any corrections he thinks must be made.

The use of voice recognition systems requires quite heavy preparation. Like any other user, the translator first of all has to master the use of the application basics. He then needs to configure and 'instruct' the system in order to make the best use of its functionalities. To this aim and purpose, the translator must:

- carry out a series of dictations so that the application will 'recognise his voice',
- dictate, then correct, as many of his own standard type documents as possible, to build up and customize the system's dictionaries, and also to fine tune the algorithms in order to reduce the risk of ambiguity and error,
- create and record the voice macro commands which will be used to control all the standard operations, particularly those used in word processing (*i.e.* stop, start, select, correct, create table, indent, etc.),
- learn the application's basic rules (how to dictate figures, acronyms, etc.),
- learn to use the system from within his regular word processor – *e.g.* 'dictate directly into Word'.

Every time the user dictates a new translation, all the dictionaries and algorithms are automatically upgraded and enhanced.

Voice recognition software is, in fact, a kind of 'vocal word processor', where the microphone replaces the keyboard and recognition errors are made instead of typing errors. Recognition rates improve with volume and soon become more than adequate and even impressive when the material is specialised and repetitive.

Voice recognition can provide all the benefits of a word processor in terms of page outlay, error correction, cutting and pasting, editing, formatting, tables, window management, styles, sorting, and so on, with all the commands being activated by the operator's voice. The translator can also use it to process translated material which has already been 'put through' a translation memory system, as he can then dictate the segments that need replacing or completing and carry out any corrections required.

It should also be said that most voice recognition systems allow the translator to listen to the translation (*via* a voice synthesis system). This means that in future, a translator may receive dictated source material which will then be digitized, processed by a translation memory system, and translated using voice recognition

technology, pending the introduction of voice translation memories, no doubt in the very near future.

The impetus behind the move towards the use of voice recognition technology in translation is of course linked to the search for ever greater productivity gains. Translators will need to get used to this new way of working and will have to learn to dictate efficiently, to implement corrections quickly so as to avoid error repetition, and adopt completely new translation techniques. This means talking at normal speed, speaking clearly but without unduly stressing the words, avoiding ‘noise’, using a top of the range microphone, finding the optimal position for the microphone and always positioning the microphone the same way when dictating. It also means learning to take advantage of the differences between oral and written translation, *i.e.* the fact that oral translation ‘flows’ better and is more coherent, and overcome the drawbacks of dictating a translation without the support of the keyboard, which requires a lot of practice.

Some translators do readily move over to voice recognition: this is particularly true of those who never type their own translations (the few who are still around are obviously keen ‘VR’ enthusiasts) or of those who have poor keyboard skills and have to keep their eyes riveted on their fingers when typing. Productivity gains are less spectacular for those who are good typists and who have completely mastered window management and advanced word processing skills. For these, the key advantage would be in being freed from the workstation. The prospect of being able to use truly mobile digital voice recorders, as provided with the more advanced voice recognition software, is often the clinching argument.

For the older generation of translators, voice recognition technology is the revenge of the good old Dictaphone which used to be the only way to productivity gains in pre word processor days. If the Dictaphone can be seen as a voice recording system without the recognition (that was provided by the typist), voice recognition systems are in a sense Dictaphones with a built-in text typing function (thus saving on the cost of the typist).

Be that as it may, most translators – with the exception of those who have never mastered the keyboard – carry on doing what they have always done, *i.e.* they use the new technology whenever it proves really useful, and continue to use the tried and tested tools of the trade whenever the gains are doubtful.

5.7 Translation management software

Translation management software is designed to organise and manage the whole translation chain. It usually covers a number of the following functions:

- prospect management,
- client management,

- management of agreements, briefs, specifications and procedures,
- contract forming,
- management of partner relations,
- generation of estimates,
- work load and work flow scheduling,
- pre-translation operations,
- quality control,
- quality management,
- billing and collection,
- comparisons between estimated and real time and cost,
- post-mortem project analyses.

Workflow management software is becoming a standard component of the workstations of freelancers working for the bigger translation companies. The latter have developed systems that feed in the material to be translated by the translator, indicate schedules and deadlines, and monitor translator's progress.

5.8 Machine translation systems requiring human intervention

Machine translation systems which require some kind of human intervention are generally known as 'semi-automatic' translation systems. They automatically substitute confirmed terminology and phraseology and 'suggest' translations for segments for which no previous approved translation exists. They are similar in that respect to translation memory systems. Their most remarkable feature is that they usually offer the human translator a choice of possible translations that have to be confirmed.

In practice, translators working with such systems very often decide to 'disable' some of their functions on the grounds that they can no more bear to make the same choices over and over again, repeatedly, and to correct mistakes they have already corrected hundreds of times.

6. The Impact of information technology

Clearly, information technology and dedicated applications are now having a major impact on the profession, and are beginning to create a rift between those who are able and willing to make full use of the resources available, and those who are not and leave the added value bits of the translation service provision to the work providers or agencies, on whom they become increasingly dependent because they never get the money to invest in the technology. They are, quite often, the older generations, who find it rather difficult to keep pace with the

evolutions of ICT. The rift also means there is a growing gap between the two groups in terms of remuneration for their work. And a finer distinction is now also beginning to appear within the 'technology users', between those who are quite satisfied with using the basic combination of 'word processor + translation memory + terminology management system + Internet' on the one hand, and those who offer more elaborate services and process specific types of materials and media, by using more sophisticated software systems (subtitling applications, localisation applications, translation project management systems, and an infinite variety of customized software). Again, the latter come off best in terms of added value and remuneration.

From manual to automatic

Introduction

Information technology has had a tremendous impact on translators' information, practices, and markets. Depending on circumstances, the impact has been unreservedly favourable, mitigated, or potentially detrimental.

1. The friendly revolution

No one would question the view that translators have enormously benefited on many counts from the computerisation of their workstation and working environment.

Intranets. For translators, as for many other professionals, the intranet is the best way to share resources and experience, to be in constant touch with colleagues, to access other staff within the company or within the group for information or advice on specific points as well as for quick revisions. It is also, basically, the best and quickest way to create, use and constantly update shared resources.

E-mail. Email is another essential tool for translators as it allows all kinds of file transfers, reduces the risks associated with barely legible faxes, establishes immediate communication and reinforces the links between mailing list subscribers. In the guise of mailing lists and forums, it is also a powerful source of information about all kinds of freeware, some of which can be a real goldmine for those who 'know something about computers'.

The Web. The Web has now become a kind of vital umbilical cord linking translators to a wealth of on-line documentation. It allows the translator to have access to specialist forums and discussion groups related to specific subject areas or materials, to put their questions to domain specialists, to consult colleagues and fellow-professionals, strengthen collaborative networks, to access the vast array of terminology bases and banks now available (with the proviso that too much of the terminology available on the Web is of mediocre quality, and that its availability encourages all kinds of amateur translators to try their hand at technical translation, simply because they have '*found a fantastic dictionary on the Internet*') and gain immediate access to all types of particularly helpful documentation

(in particular, foreign language documentation from subsidiaries or partners in other countries, documentation from competitors working in the same or similar fields and producing similar products, manufacturers' documentation, parts lists and so on).

More importantly, the Web has well and truly changed the perception of translation and translation practices. In pre-Internet days, every translator was deeply convinced of the importance of 'knowing the subject' and getting hold of the necessary linguistic raw material (*e.g.* the terminology and phraseology) before attempting to translate. But the obstacles and the time needed to get hold of the relevant sources and documentation were such that hardly anyone was able to comply with that requirement. Failing access to informers, the required documentation and dictionaries would usually come days after the translation had been handed in. Even when they did have the time, translators were not sure where to start looking and even less so whether what they were looking for actually existed. Everyone knew full well what needed to be done, but few had the wherewithal to do it.

Today, with a click or two of the mouse (thanks Google and others!) translators can know whether the material has been translated (in part or in full), get all the information needed to elucidate the meaning of an unknown term or concept or to learn about the subject, check on the validity of their hypotheses, find models and preformatted translations or phrases – and much more. Definitions, drawings, charts, pictures and all kinds of representations are just one click removed.

It takes no more than a few seconds to find in-depth information (a key Web site, for instance) on the subject of the translation and it is usually a matter of minutes (or an hour or two, as the case may be) to learn what it is vital to know. There no longer is any excuse for bypassing any episode of the full documentation stage.

When confronted with a terminology problem, translators can access major terminology databases within seconds (or minutes if the network and database are very, very, busy), as well as a host of dictionaries, glossaries and word banks for almost every conceivable language and subject area. There is in fact very little that translators cannot find, nowadays, in the terminological and phraseological treasure trove that the Web has now become. And if they get stuck, fellow list subscribers will be glad to oblige.

For the first time ever, whenever the search is conducted in the target language, translators now have access to thematic terminology (*i.e.* terminology relating to an entire subject area or domain, as opposed to '*pinpointed*' terminology relating to particular items found in the translation). The documentation corpus in the target language will most probably contain all the relevant terminology in its 'natural environment' so to speak, and provide detailed knowledge of which terms are really used and in which context. We have shifted from 'source-to-target

terminography' to '**target-to-source terminography**': instead of listing the terms in the source document and looking up their equivalents in the target language, translators can now mine out a parallel document in the target language that exactly 'mirrors' the source document in the sense that it deals with exactly the same subject and link up the terminology in that target language document with the terminology identified in the source document.

The documentation available on the Web also contains all the phraseological stereotypes that used to be impossible to find (unless, by sheer luck one came across a document dealing with the same subject in the target language and read it through). Today, given a relevant corpus in PDF format and the standard Acrobat® explorer, the phraseological concordances are (just about) immediate. This means that the new resources now available over the Web are such that phraseological accuracy has come well within the translator's reach.

The Web resources also allow the translator to check a 'hunch', by entering the term as a key word in any search engine to find out, using the search results as a knowledge corpus, if the term or phrase actually exists, whether it is accurate and what exactly it refers to. Any term can thus be shown in context, with all its different usages, and the translator can then determine whether that term can be used in the target language in identical conditions to those in which it appears in the source text.

And if the translator still has doubts or has failed to find some of the terminology or phraseology needed, the Web can also be used to contact domain specialists or experts, informers, colleagues and anyone else who might be able to supply the answer.

The Web has therefore changed the very way translators work. It is now possible to apply all the precepts that were often impossible to comply with due to the sheer material obstacles the translator faced. It has brought all translators the benefits of instant communication and of the exponential (and continuous) growth of technical and linguistic resources. The Web has become a professional tool of such vital importance that translators simply stop translating when, and as long as, access is denied for whatever reason.

The Internet has also put an end to the translators' traditional isolation, even to the point of distracting them from their work. Today, provided no broker or other third party comes in between them, they can easily and instantly contact the work provider, the author or designer of the material in hand, various information providers, all of their partners, fellow translators (particularly those who subscribe to the same mailing lists), and just about anyone they fancy.

The Internet has also completely changed the structure of the translators' markets and working conditions:

- The potential market for any translator or translation company is now global. Anyone can offer his services to any potential work provider or employer who has access to the worldwide Web: it just takes a home page and a resume.
- Anyone with a translation need can now appeal for offers worldwide. Anyone can put in a call for tenders and, up to a point, even put up non confidential documents for translation to get quotes, then simply sit back and wait for translators to put in bids for the contract and send samples of their work.
- A translator living in a rural village in Brittany (Western France) can in theory find clients in Colorado or Copenhagen, just as an English to French translator from Wuhan (China) or from Madeira can find clients in Paris. The globalisation of the translation market means that clients and translators can be located anywhere in the world where there is an Internet access – and that is just about anywhere. It also means that the possibility now exists for work providers to systematically compare prices the world over and go for the lowest bidder.
- The Internet also allows translators (and revisers) from different parts of the world to work on the same translation contract under the same project management setup and even to translate and edit the same document collaboratively without ever meeting each other face to face.
- More directly, being an international medium of communication, the Internet has helped to increase the global volume of translation worldwide – as demonstrated by the expanding machine translation market in this sector. This raises the question of ‘human’ vs. ‘machine’ translation. In fact, time will no doubt show that the massive invasion of rather poor machine translations published or obtained *via* the Web will contribute towards the disrepute of machine translation and help to place the emphasis on good quality human translation.

Still, it must be noted that, if more than 95% of machine translation is ‘poor’, the remaining 5% is astonishingly good: it concerns technical documents processed by translation engines into which major corporations have pumped huge amounts of terminology, phraseology, translation memories, and algorithms that can be taught to correct their mistakes. Also, if ‘human’ translation is to have a bright future, translators must be able to adapt very quickly to the non-standard demands of all those who need to access information.
- In fact, everyone wants his information up on the Web and everyone looks for information from the Web and this generates business both ways for translators.

Given that English, the worldwide language *par excellence*, is a prerequisite for visibility on the World Wide Web, *translators are called upon to translate more and more from all varieties of English into any other language (so that everyone ‘gets hold of’ the other people’s information) and from any language into*

international English (so that everyone ‘disseminates’ his or her information). Thus, translators take on two new functions.

The first of these is monitoring economic, scientific, technical or strategic information on the worldwide Web on behalf of clients. For economic reasons, that function is carried out blindly by MT systems. Today, it increasingly involves summarizing or synthesizing the information (which in turn involves translation for gisting purposes or synoptic translation or any other type of part translation). In that light, unless translators also abandon this segment of the market to various automata, which is unfortunately more than likely, ‘watch translators’ will most certainly multiply and thrive.

The second new function which translators can fulfil is designing and translating (one should say ‘*localising*’) Web pages on behalf of their clients (when the latter have neither the means nor the inclination to do so themselves) and, in some cases, setting up the servers on which the pages and sites will be loaded. This is a growth sector for translators willing to redefine their skills and fields of competence – something which, incidentally, they have already done several times in the past decade or so. Web sites are the new ElDorado, but fortunes are not so easily made: to get there, translators must acquire ever more tools and skills (and hope that the drive for automation of value-added operations slows down).

On a more general level, IT has generated huge translation markets. As a field in itself, IT as a science, as a discipline, as a profession or as a field of competence linked to other professions, generates what are thought to be the largest volumes of any area of specialised translation, with growth rates of some 20 to 30% a year and even more for some language pairs.

IT has also given rise to a new field of translation, namely localisation, *i.e.* the translation of software packages or Web sites or video games and their adaptation to different national or ‘local’ (language and/or culture-specific) markets. As an activity *per se*, IT therefore helps to maintain an army of translators, both freelance and salaried.

IT has also been largely instrumental in two further developments:

- it has hastened the introduction of quality control procedures (in particular *via* translation company intranet systems or *via* work providers’ quality protocols), thereby helping to give the translation profession a more ‘modern’ and ‘hi-tech’ flavour and highlighting the complex procedures involved;
- it has accelerated the development of the terminology and phraseology resources need to ‘fuel’ the machine translation systems. Everyone has been busy ‘refining’ the fuel and translators should thank their lucky stars for the resources that are now available.

IT has therefore generated and opened up whole new markets. It has also to a certain extent cleaned up the same markets – because the complexity and cost of the software and the equipment needed is making it more and more difficult for amateurs to operate. Moreover, the Internet has provided a convenient means to manage supply and demand. Last but not least, IT has led to the development of translation software aids (generally known as CAT or ‘Computer-Assisted Translation’ tools), which have generated both productivity gains for translators and profits for the software designers.

2. The not so friendly revolution

But the ICT revolution has also had its down sides. In the translation community, even its most ardent supporters have to acknowledge five major drawbacks:

1. Computerisation has changed translation from an amateur pursuit into a cottage industry and now, into an industrial process. IT has in fact encouraged and probably induced the industrialisation of the translation profession by (a) significantly increasing the volumes of translatable material, (b) providing the tools needed to process such large volumes and (c) accelerating the implementation of standardised procedures.

For all translators, this now means increasingly heavy investments if they want to meet their work providers’ requirements and deserve the ‘technologically efficient’ label. Anyone pulling out of the race for ever more technology would be relegated to the position of the ‘pure text translator’, who can no longer aspire to the added value that goes with using sophisticated software or computer code processing.

Not so long ago, translators were faced with the choice of ‘*sticking with text translation*’ or investing in the hope of being able to aim for the more lucrative IT-related markets. Today, the standard is word-processor + desk publishing + translation memory management + terminology management + full Internet functionalities. And the choice is either to stick with that standard or go for image processing, voice recognition, HTML, XML, XHTML, XSL editors, and what not so as to have a (lucrative) go at the new types of translation markets which are already in the pipeline.

2. Globalisation, the logical outcome of computerisation, mainly means that whoever can offer the lowest rates anywhere in the world has a good chance of getting the contracts, or at least that competition is now putting pressure on rates the world over.
3. IT may have freed translators from certain repetitive and tedious tasks, but it has also made them slaves to their workstations, even though voice recogni-

tion software may give the translator a bit of respite from the keyboard. The Internet has put an end to the translator's age-old isolation, but the workstation screen is now that same translator's only horizon, *albeit* one which is open onto the world. In fact, not few translators see IT as a necessary evil: productivity gains must be made in the face of growing competition and productivity can only be increased thanks to more IT, more memory space, greater computing power and speed, more efficient software tools, wider and quicker access to documentation, and ... more time spent in front of the computer screen. And everyone is aware that the biggest share of any productivity goes to the work provider, not to the translator. It is just a matter of producing more to stay in the race.

4. IT has also increased the opportunities for working from home, which is often seen as a major cost-cutting factor. Relying on 'remote' workers obviously means reduced overheads in terms of office space and equipment – these being transferred onto the translator. The setup may seem attractive to people wanting to work in their home region, or wanting to bring up their children in a pleasant rural environment, 'far from the madding crowd', but it does have its drawbacks. In particular, some 'home' workers may quickly feel cut off from their partners and colleagues and miss their support when facing difficult clients. Conversely, one can argue that the Internet also provides the 'antidote' to such problems by enabling 'home' workers to keep in touch with fellow translators *via* e-mail, forums and mailing lists.

Over the past decade or so, translators have made a gigantic effort to keep up with all the advances in information technology. Having mastered word processing (admittedly often only making use of a fraction of its potential), translators have had to learn to deal with new types of source materials, using all sorts of different codes and formats, and learn to use fairly sophisticated software tools. Many have had to face these changes without ever having had proper training in computer science and technology. In the late 1980s, for instance, the University Translator Training Centre in Rennes (CFTT) was the only academic centre that included a major IT component in its translator training curriculum. Many translators had to learn about IT the hard way, by muddling through by themselves, a situation which may bring some satisfaction but which is also fraught with difficulties and is a source of errors and bad practice. The market, for its part, demands ever greater computerisation, either directly (the work provider demanding that the material be translated using a specific application or in a given format) or indirectly (through increased pressure on deadlines, inducing productivity gains that can only be achieved by resorting to ever more IT).

Discussions on translator mailing lists are a very good indicator of changes in equipment and/or skills. It all starts with questions about file formats or a 'new'

software package – questions usually relating to the rates which can be charged for using the particular software or format. Then come the technical questions on how to install the software and how to process the format. The fact that some of the members of the group have already successfully tried out the new software or new format encourages even the more cautious to follow suit. A sure sign that the new application is in common use is when the questions start to come in on the ‘bugs’ that people have encountered. This is one way of dating very precisely when new tools and materials have arrived on the market and how quickly they have become widespread among translation professionals.

Translators are in fact constantly confronted with new challenges. After having used new tools to deal with traditional source material, they now have to learn how to deal with the new source materials, *i.e.* digital material created with **yet more** new tools. This is the case with pseudo Web site cloning and the localisation of software with its on-line ancillary resources. There is a real ‘cultural’ revolution taking place in the translation profession, with a complete change in know-how and translation techniques and that revolution poses a major psychological, economic and technical challenge (and threat?) to many translators.

Many wonder whether it is worth investing so much energy and money in trying to meet the challenge. Everyone knows that translators usually benefit when new markets first appear (precisely because those new markets demand new skills and competences at a time when they are scarce), but that this premium is soon eroded as the said skills and competences become more widespread, and then vanishes completely as machine translation becomes more cost-effective than human translation in that particular market.

The irony of it all is that translators (along with the terminologists and phraseologists) have worked – and still work – hard to build up the resources which are used by the machine translation systems that are in direct competition with human translation. A case in point is that of the translation memory systems. Translators feed in their translations, but once the memory has built up a big enough stock of source materials and translations, instead of the translators being able to take advantage of the repetitive segments, they eventually no longer get paid for the segments that have already been translated. They are then expected to translate only those parts that have never been translated before, just as if a rider in a cycle race were asked to ride only on the uphill stretches, because the downhill sections of the road, which might allow him to get his breath back, are considered to be ‘too easy’ and therefore not significant. Everyone is aware that beyond the initial development phase, which requires a lot of input by engineers, MT systems are not conducive to job creation – at least not in translation.

Every time a new type of task or process helps generate added value for the translator, that task or process tends to be partly or totally automated. So instead of being a source of increased earnings, it becomes a ‘normal’ part of the translation

process (in the sense that everyone assumes that it will be carried out without any additional payment of any kind) and, ironically, the translators then have to invest in the software needed to carry out – for free – that part of the job that they used to get paid for. Some translators thus feel that IT is gradually eroding many of the added value ‘niches’, leaving them with ‘text translation’, and some would say that even that is now being threatened by the insatiable CAT and MT systems.

3. The unfriendly revolution

Anyone needing translations has always dreamed of having a translation system working in the background to provide good quality translations in record time. This is why all search engines currently offer on-line translation – rough MT which can then be improved and adjusted by a human translator if need be. It also explains why government authorities and private investors alike keep heavily promoting research into machine translation in the name of technological progress.

Today (2006), Babelfish¹³ receives more than 1,000,000 translation requests per day
(Source: Systran Systems)

3.1 Where do we stand?

Information technology tends to be seen as ‘unfriendly’ as soon as it starts replacing human operators. Given that the ultimate aim of all people in positions of power and responsibility is to develop the perfect machine translation system, translators may be forgiven for thinking that IT is basically ‘translator-unfriendly’.

Machine translation encapsulates the perfect dream for both MT system designers and work providers:

- even though they tend to be somewhat less sanguine about the prospects now that past experience has shown that things are not quite as simple as was once thought, machine translation system designers still promise wonders ... but have replaced MT by the less ambitious term ‘computer-assisted translation’ or CAT
- work providers, translation purchasers or language service managers do love MT, since machines never complain about rates or salaries, never strike, never take sick leave, do not have babies, are never in a foul mood... and work ever so fast.

13. A site offering automatic translation online.

Historically, the move has been from the concept of ‘machine translation’ to that of ‘computer-assisted translation’. After the heady days of the 1950s, scientists had to recognise that even the most powerful computers had their limitations and that the term ‘machine translation’ did not go down well with human translators. However, the sales spiel still emphasizes the ‘enormous’ productivity gains that machine translation can provide in terms of sheer volume. Any reference to quality is usually carefully avoided, as the system will naturally provide 98% accuracy and the translation will only need to be ‘*rapidly revised*’ by a ‘*native speaker*’ to be deemed absolutely perfect. That most standard MT systems may well translate 98% of the words is no argument: the translation may still be (and often is) totally meaningless.

It is indeed unfortunate that many proponents of MT only have the inadequate efforts of amateurish human translators as a point of comparison and therefore consider that there is not much to choose from between the two. Admittedly, some human translations can be worse than anything the worst MT system can produce but they are the exception.

Nevertheless, even the most rabid opponent of MT has to acknowledge that:

- Certain types of documents are perfectly suited to machine translation, because they contain a high proportion of stereotyped phrases, repetitive and standardised terminology and phraseology, simple and repetitive sentence structures, and no stylistic effects (a typical example of this being the Met Office bulletins that have been successfully translated for years and years by a translation system [TAUM] developed by the University of Montreal).
- Some people who require translations may be quite content with a very rough translation. They are often experts in a given field who are quite familiar with the domain-specific terms and phrases, who rely widely on explicit and naturally trans-lingual graphical or numerical data (such as statistics, graphs, charts, etc.), and simply need to ‘*get a rough idea of what it’s about*’, convinced that their knowledge of the subject will enable them to fill in the gaps and draw all the necessary inferences. This is a market that translators have completely neglected, solidly entrenched as they are in the idea that there is only one type of translation. They have therefore always been reluctant to offer their clients ‘selective translations’, ‘synopses’, ‘syntheses’, ‘summaries’, ‘analyses’, ‘gists’, ‘main points’ or any other types of translated information that now comes under the English heading *translation for gisting purposes* and that has been known in French for a number of years as *synoptic translation* (traduction

synoptique) or selective translation (traduction sélective) or translation of relevant information (traduction documentaire).¹⁴

Translators probably make a huge strategic mistake when they stand by and let automata take over the market for translations where the user '*just wants to know what it is about*', in the hope that, if the text happens to be of interest, the user will then ask a human translator for a full translation. In fact, the user only resorts to a human translator if the latter has already done the '*gisting*' and has done it orally, because that goes much faster. . .

- For anyone who is 'not very good at typing', machine translation will at least produce a printable version of the text. In the same vein, it might also be said that there is no chance the machine will skip one sentence or even one word.
- The quality of machine translation can be improved by preparing the source text for that type of translation. This means that the text will have been filtered to get rid of as many unknown terms, set phrases or idioms as possible and to get rid of any possible ambiguities. This can be done in several different ways:
 - (i) by demanding that the document be written in a '*simplified*' form of language (such as the AECMA varieties of French and English) devoid of any ambiguous terms, syntactical forms, stereotypes or meanings, *i.e.* where each element of the code has been attributed a single value and where each value corresponds to only one element of the code;
 - (ii) by processing the document before running the MT system, so that any unknown or insufficiently explicit items can be identified and translated by a human translator, or so that the latter can enter the necessary equivalences or algorithms in the system. Some MT systems include the capacity to learn new rules and to apply them and the best machine translation systems include a text processing module (a pre-translator) or an extraction module to '*smooth*' the text, *i.e.* lift out anything that the system would not be able to translate.
- At present, machine translation works reasonably well in the following cases considered either in isolation or in combination with others:
 - when extremely large volumes need to be translated, and/or
 - the deadline is extremely tight, and/or
 - there is very little or no money available for the translation, and/or
 - the quality factor is not paramount, and/or
 - the system can draw on a wealth of dictionaries specifically relevant to the subject matters concerned, and/or

14. Cf. other publications by the same author on these types of translations (Maison du Dictionnaire).

- the source document is highly standardised and with no ambiguities of meaning because (a) it has been written using a simplified language, or (b) the author has been careful to use unambiguous language or (c) a human operator or an MT system has identified and clarified any ambiguous or unclear items, and/or
- the translation will be revised (post-edited) by a human translator or reviser.

As the case may be, the system will be referred to as a ‘rough translation system’ or a ‘human-assisted system’ (in fact, a pre-translator-assisted system) or a ‘post-edited system’.

In the present state of the technology, an ideal scenario for optimal machine translation would have three phases:

- The pre-translation phase, when another system or a human translator gets the source material ready for translation and perfectly ‘translatable’ (by eliminating ambiguity or simplifying sentences, for instance) and also inserts all the necessary terminology and phraseology.
- The actual machine translation phase, carried out on material which is in line with the system’s capabilities, using the previously updated resource tables. The MT system may be assisted by a human operator who supplies it with suggestions.
- The revision – or post-translation – phase, carried out by a human translator and bearing the name of ‘post-editing’ in that particular case.

In this scenario, the machine translation system and the human translator work together, as they do to a lesser degree whenever the translator uses a translation system *‘just to get an idea’* plus, in most cases, as much terminology as possible.

3.2 Should translators be afraid of machine translation?

As mentioned above, no one sincerely denies the fact that machine translation systems can, and sometimes do, work satisfactorily from the point of view of both quality **and** quantity. Such systems can perform efficiently, providing the source texts have been adapted to the system’s algorithms, or that the algorithms can be easily modified and updated, and that the relevant terminology and phraseology resources are available in the system’s dictionaries.

The real threat to the translator comes from clients or employers wanting to move over to ‘fully computerised’ systems, where the ‘human factor’ is reduced to simply *‘feeding in’* the necessary terminology and phraseology and transfer algorithms.

It is undoubtedly true that machine translation systems are getting better and finding new applications by the day. But up to now, they have only been a threat to the least reliable and therefore the most vulnerable translators.

As we saw earlier, machine translation can only rival human translators in areas and under conditions such that any human translator would gladly hand over the material to an automated system. This generally means (a) translations done on a shoestring budget (machine translation is used because '*translators are far too expensive*'); (b) excruciatingly repetitive, monotonous and stereotyped source documents, and (c) excessively short deadlines.

It must also be stressed that machine systems only get the better of human translators when the comparison is purely on grounds of volume. Given that translators insist on basing their rates on a word or page count, they should not be surprised to see MT proponents defending the CAT system's productivity in terms of words-per-hour or similar counts. Translators must therefore be prepared to demonstrate that they too can **easily** achieve similar quantity/quality ratios if they are on a level playing field (*i.e.* very low quality criteria, oral translation used to provide a 'rough translation', etc.) and that they can actually do a lot better than the machine system if the client only needs the 'gist' or a summary of the source text.

It is still true to say that the more a system translates (in terms of volume), the less credible it tends to become and the more it enhances the value of good quality human translation. It must also be said that the various machine translation systems freely available on the Web are often used as 'loss leaders' by translation agencies: the potential client is offered a 'free' service, but must then pay a substantial sum to get a good quality human translation or post-edited machine translation.

Ultimately, there is no point in translators wasting their time and energy fighting against hopeless odds. Translators must therefore:

- realize that MT systems are here to stay and try to understand how they work in order to understand their limitations;
- understand that MT systems are incapable of producing **really** good quality translations of most of the material at present on the translation market;
- assume that MT systems are only useful in markets which are no longer of any interest to human translators;
- rejoice in the fact that (at least in theory) MT systems won't be playing in the market niches for a long time to come;
- concentrate on what they do well and machines cannot do: *i.e.* natural, efficient, immediately operational, and in some cases, selective translation;
- use every opportunity to exploit the new possibilities opened up by MT systems, which lead to new markets and new professional skills (pre-translating and post-editing being jobs in their own right).

Translators will also have to accept that MT systems will gradually take over all the areas where they are likely to be cost-effective. MLIS Project compendia clearly show which way efforts are pointing. One project, for instance, aims to automate the translation of financial statements by applying a specialised translation memory, while another aims to automate the translation of contracts, etc. These are often highly specialised and highly lucrative niche markets (the translators' bread and butter) and it could well lead to a situation where the translator will be reduced to translating anything the machine is not (yet) able to translate (or not able to translate cost-effectively), rather than what has been the case up to now, *i.e.* the machine being fed materials that translators find too tedious or repetitive or 'cheap' to tackle. Specialisation generally means wide use of language stereotypes, and therefore more potential for computer-assisted processing, and the lucrativeness is also attractive to MT system designers and manufacturers.

No one really knows what lies in store for the translator, but in all likelihood, this is just the beginning of a major revolution in the profession and in the way translators actually go about translating. The amount of translation done by, or assisted by, MT systems will necessarily increase as will the volume of work done by human translators. The effort put into developing machine translation will carry on apace and so will the amount of investment: no country or R&D community can afford to be seen to give up the quest. None of the economically developed countries wants to be left behind in the race to develop and improve viable Human Language Technology systems, and in particular machine translation systems. Major advances have been made over the past fifty years, and particularly in the last fifteen years: translation between multiple language pairs is now possible thanks to the use of pivot languages; equivalent term substitution is now (almost) infallible; algorithms have been written to deal with source material devoid of meaning ambiguity and cultural idiosyncrasies; realistic, gradually attainable objectives are now being set and have replaced the utopian aims of fifty years ago. In any case, the moment translators find out whether MT should be seen as an ally or a rival, it will be too late to do anything about it.

But the real question is not whether translators should fear automation: this has already brought the profession major benefits in terms of productivity gains and eliminating repetitive and tedious task. The question is: where will the process of automation stop? The answer, as already noted, will give the measure of what will be left to human translators.

3.3 Where will it all end?

Still, when it comes to the crunch, machine translation systems are perhaps a lesser evil than mad scientists. . . A team of scientists has apparently set out to develop a

system which will be capable of finding everything that has already been translated on the Web, obviously with a view to re-using the material. Everyone knows that translations published on Web sites are not necessarily 100% reliable, but the person responsible for this project (if responsible is the word) works under the assumption (did anyone say *delusion*?) that even a very poor translation is better than no translation at all. Considering that any research project that is liable to attract funding and publicity for its initiators is deemed to be scientifically valid, translators may well have qualms.

Plainly: anyone taking a cold hard look at the scene cannot but reach the conclusion that all efforts are undertaken to get rid of as much of the human component as possible in the translation process and the fact that this is also true of many other processes is rather poor solace.

From craft to industry

Introduction

Reality has finally caught up with the myth of the ‘language industries’. Clearly, translation has started going industrial and the ‘industrial’ segments of the translation market are essential because (a) they account for a significant share of the global market and (b) this is where new operating models and procedures as well as professional tools emerge before spreading down to other sectors of the market and then to individual translators. Industrialisation being closely intertwined with technological innovation, many of its signs and effects refer primarily to technologization which, as far as translation and localisation are concerned, is prominent.

1. Markers of industrialisation

Translation now bears all the hallmarks of an industrial activity, *i.e.*:

- the volumes for translation have been ‘massified’,
- digitisation makes mass-processing possible, if not mandatory,
- documentation is produced to standards and therefore more easily ‘workable’ by industrial means,
- industrial methods, procedures and work organisations are being developed, leading to more rational procedures and processes,
- the translation process itself is being standardised, mostly through the use of translation templates of various kinds,
- specific tools and technologies are being developed and implemented,
- quality management is the word,
- as any other activity (and possibly more so than most) translation is being internationalised, globalised, off-shored,
- outsourcing has become common practice,
- translation companies and agencies are developing fast,
- concentration and capitalisation increase rapidly and accelerate,
- a specialist salaried labour force (above board or hidden) is developing,

- productivity gains have become the absolute driving force,
- division of labour and job specialisation are spreading,
- ‘supervisors’ are coming into play in the shape of project or translation managers,
- ‘distance’ working is on the increase,
- competition is getting ever fiercer.
- everyone is striving to get a foothold in the market ‘niches’

1.1 Massification

There is obviously a very strong correlation between the exponential growth in global demand for translation and the industrialisation of the processes involved as industrialisation does not make sense unless huge volumes of production are required.

It is difficult to determine whether it is the increase in the volume of materials requiring translation that has prompted the move towards industrialisation or whether it worked the other way round. In all probability, both propositions are true: as volumes increased, industrialisation became possible and, once the industrial processing systems and forces came into existence, the available capacity and new cost conditions fuelled new demand.

The increase in volume is particularly noticeable in terms of job size (*e.g.* just think of the volume of the documentation generated by a new computer equipment or software or by the construction of, say, a natural gas liquefaction plant), and also in terms of the number of languages involved (documents are now frequently translated into 10 or 20 languages, or even more in some cases).

The exponential growth in the volumes of translation is a result of the computerisation of the documentation chain. The effect has been felt from major company clients (those who now require translations into a wide range of languages) down to the ordinary occasional client. Office software and, in particular, desk-top publishing packages, now mean that anyone, or almost anyone, can produce high quality materials, burn CDs, set up a Web site and publish hundreds of Web pages or create a company DVD at negligible cost. The fact that such materials are so common and so easy and cheap to produce has, in turn, fuelled the tremendous expansion in demand for translation: anything promotional in any way has to be globalised and globalisation is the mother of translation. Significantly too, this rise in volume concerns all kinds of source materials, from text to discourse, from audiovisual to multimedia materials, from software code to Web content, and so on.

1.2 Processability of materials requiring translation

Any material (text, voice or sound, images or animated graphics) can now be made available in digital format: the creation or conversion equipment exists and the cost is negligible. It can thus be processed (including by translation) using a range of automatic or semi-automatic processes and processors.

1.3 Standardisation of source material (and documentation)

Obviously, any kind of industrial-scale production tends to generate as much standardisation as possible. The same rule applies to documentation, and all the more so as the documentation is usually expected to be systematically updated or expanded. Standard specifications (DTDs, graphic charters, style sheets, style guides, formatting standards, etc.) naturally apply to all documentation and, when translation is expected or likely, additional specific standards in terms of clarity, readability, terminology and phraseology or registers, etc. will come into play to facilitate automatic processing of the material, which, incidentally, also helps to make life a lot easier for the human translator, *albeit* at the expense of creativity and freedom. Content and form are standardised or ‘controlled’ so as to speed up any industrial-type processing that might be called for.

1.4 Industrial methods, processes and work organisation

The increase in overall volume as well as in individual job volume requires well organised processes replicating industrial-type models that include:

- job specifications,
- teamwork under a team lead and project manager,
- the anticipation, identification and elimination of bottlenecks, inefficiencies and downtime, the optimisation of resource consumption, etc.
- efficient work scheduling and workload planning and smoothing,
- efficient sub-contractor management,
- quality assurance and quality control,
- rework and correction procedures,
- systematic product validation or qualification.

As in any production process (and a technical or specialist translation is, to all intents and purposes, a **product**) protocols or procedures are established to:

- specify each task;
- define the raw material input at each production phase;
- specify what stage the product should have reached at the end of each phase in the process or what component should then be made available;

- specify who the operators will be for each task to be performed (*i.e.* specify the qualifications required for the tasks to be performed and the nature of such tasks);
- incorporate all the standard quality assurance principles.

Such protocols are designed to improve the quality/productivity ratio and tend to **standardise** the source material (*i.e.* the material for translation), the procedures, and the end product (*i.e.* the translation itself).

Large-scale translations require a critical path analysis process, involving a high degree of planning (task analysis, scheduling, sequencing, task and resource allocation and distribution, etc.) in order to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness and reduce time to market, while ultimately aiming for ‘fault-free quality’ and maximum productivity gains.

1.5 Process and product standardisation

The procedures designed to achieve a more rational translation process and enhance quality assurance lead to increased standardisation of the way different operators deal with the source material. In the more extreme cases, this can actually mean translators apply patterns or ‘templates’, with the work provider supplying the terminology, the phraseology models, the structures and ‘information maps’ to be applied to presentations and argumentation and, more generally, a style guide, a graphics charter, and whatever detailed procedures the translator is expected to follow **to the letter** for fear of disqualification. The aim is to achieve some degree of industrial standardisation of all translators’ deliverables. To that end, in-house translators are fed all the necessary resources and mandatory specifications (*i.e.* procedures) *via* the intranet and outside translators are fed the same *via* specialised extranets.

1.6 Development and use of productivity-enhancing tools

Software tools are the *primum mobile* of the industrialisation process in the area of translation. Word processors, desk-top publishing packages, editors, localisation or captioning software, voice recognition software, and many more have helped extend industrial type processing and productivity gains.

Industrialisation is usually synonymous with automation, and translation is just like any other activity in this respect. Automation has made particular progress in the following areas:

- terminology extraction,
- targeted phraseology extraction,

- text re-processing prior to machine translation (*i.e.* clarifying ambiguity, extracting unknown elements, etc.),
 - automatic or semi-automatic terminology embedding,
 - automatic or semi-automatic phraseology embedding,
 - spell checking,
 - grammar checking,
 - automatic formatting (use of DTDs, style sheets, compiling/decompiling),
 - indexing (including for video material or software),
 - retrieval and re-use of previously translated material, *via* translation memories,
 - conversion, back-conversion, formatting and reformatting, including printing-related operations,
 - use of macro commands,
- and, most notably,
- machine translation itself.

The trend is even more noticeable if we include the large-scale terminology and phraseology resources that are being mass-produced by the language industries and, last but not least, the translation industry is now, for the first time, using industrial process tools designed to manage production and workflow.

Indeed, the ultimate in productivity and quality management is workflow management in conjunction with all kinds of process management tools. When this is in effect, the translator's work is prepared, monitored, and checked automatically. The material to be translated is fed from the control room into the translator's workstation (which may happen to be next door or thousands of miles away). All the terminology, phraseology, previously translated segments, directions, specifications, and suggestions for translation are already in place. All tags have been taken care of. All necessary conversions, extractions, additions, etc. have been made. Once the translation gets under way, the translator gets whatever is needed at the moment it is needed. Progress is plotted against the agreed or specified schedule. If need be, the translator gets warning of falling back on schedule. Translated material is automatically forwarded to checkers and revisers who, in turn, are taken over by the workflow management system.

1.7 Quality management

As any other process undergoing industrialisation, translation has to face up to the question of quality assurance and quality control if only because this seems to be the last line of defence in the face of competition (on the generally mistaken assumption that the competition is somehow always unfair and of poor quality).

Obviously, translators and their clients (and everyone else involved) have been concerned with quality since time immemorial, but the difference is now in the way quality assurance and quality control are implemented in what has become some sort of a mass production industry. It is precisely because the materials, tools, work organisation and processes used in the translation business are increasingly those of a *bona fide* 'industry' that major companies that buy heavy volumes of translation are increasingly putting translation contracts under the supervision and control of engineers, who quite naturally apply to translation the same process management methods and standards that they use in any industrial engineering contract. This has deeply modified the whole approach to translation and has led, in particular, to the application of quality assurance methods to the global service provision activities (including translation) to the translation process (the translating) and to the validation of the end result (the translation). Incidentally, engineers involved in translation management usually approach it as they would any other industrial activity, *i.e.* professionally, as a highly technical process requiring specific professional skills and competences.

1.8 Internationalisation, globalisation, off-shoring, anglicisation

Like any other industry, translation has been affected by internationalisation (increasing geographical dispersion of economic activities across national borders) in the sense that work providers can now look for translation service providers anywhere in the world and by globalisation (growing interdependence of countries world-wide).

Translation is now a 24/7 business where anyone needing a job done at any time of day or night can find a translation company or translator at work somewhere. A businessman in Paris can easily send a document to Australia for urgent translation from French into English at midnight and download the translation the next morning. The translation is ready for whatever purpose, without anyone having lost any sleep or been charged extra for night work. And anyone fearing that the Australian company would not produce the right variety of English may be quite satisfied to learn that there are quite a few truly British (or American) translators down under. The next step will almost certainly be shift-based systems with teams of translators working round the clock to make maximum use of equipment and reduce time to market while offering a 24/7 service. This is how translation companies already work on a one-off basis when faced with a particularly urgent or large-scale contract and some companies have already made it a permanent feature of their operation.

Translation supply used to be more or less at the national level, with translation service providers concentrated in a few major centres. Then, under the influence of decentralisation, it became regional or local. Now, thanks to the Inter-

net, supply (as well as demand) is potentially global. Any client can shop around the Web and compare prices, then choose a translator literally on the other side of the world. Many translation agencies already indulge in this kind of sometimes acrobatic practice and farm out their work to 'off-shore' translators. Off-shoring can be based on the need to have translations done in the 'target language' countries, but it is generally seen purely as a cost-cutting exercise.

As a case in point, the European single currency has bluntly highlighted price differentials between translators in various EU countries, with the effect that pressure is put on those in the more prosperous parts of the Union to reduce their prices. Strangely enough, this never works the other way round, with the people in the 'cheaper' countries being paid more in line with what people get in 'more expensive' countries.

In fact, globalisation is simply confirming and accelerating a trend that many professionals have been aware of for a number of years, *i.e.* that translation volumes for a given language tend to increase in countries where translation into that language is relatively cheap and *vice-versa*.

Some work providers are literally 'off-shoring' their translation to low-cost countries, which, in turn, leads some translators to go and work in low-cost environments as is the case with the Madeira-based translators working into Portuguese. And it often so happens that an agency that has landed a contract in its own country sub-contracts it to another agency in a 'cheaper' country, both taking equal shares in the price differential. Sub-contracting is unquestionably motivated by the lower rates being paid in some parts of the world: the work provider in, say, Seattle, contracts to a broker in Belgium (who has all the EU contacts), who might for example sub-contract to a translating company in Barcelona for Spanish and Portuguese (because Spain is cheaper) another company in Budapest for French and one in Paris for German, with the actual German translators possibly living in Turkey.

The same process is responsible for the supremacy of varieties of English. Everyone wants to be 'visible' the world over *via* the Internet and that means being present or represented in English (and no doubt in Chinese in years to come). So, everything has to be put up in English, either directly or through translation. For that reason, any native English speaker with an inclination to become a translator and able to show some degree of proficiency, can find work abroad in a few days, and translators who are not native English speakers need to seriously increase their proficiency in that language if they do not want to get left behind. As already stated, it used to be considered unnatural and unprofessional to translate *into* a foreign language, but principles are now often going by the board as market pressures increase and translating into one or more foreign languages has become a matter of economic survival in some places.

1.9 Outsourcing

The translation industry has both benefited from, and been affected by, the general move towards outsourcing. Over the past ten to fifteen years, more and more companies and other large organisations requiring huge volumes of translation have come to the conclusion that '*all things considered, they are not in the translation business*', and have consequently decided to shut down their in-house translation departments and outsource all their translations.

The outsourcing of translation jobs is one factor behind the big rise in the overall translation sales figures. This, in turn, has led to the simultaneous rise in the number of both freelance and salaried translators across the world. The mechanism works as follows:

- businesses and organisations with translation needs outsource their translations to language service companies;
- the language service companies take care of the most profitable part of the contracts in-house and contract out the parts that they are not able or willing to deal with, even operating as brokers in some cases;
- the translation service companies sub-contract the translating to freelance translators, giving top priority to their regular vendors. If they must, they call on newcomers.

In fact, most freelance translators primarily give top priority to their own regular direct clients and only turn to the translation agencies if they are short of work and those starting out in the translation business squeeze in, hoping to win larger contracts.

And, naturally enough, everyone strives to optimise workloads while securing regular clients and maximising profit.

1.10 The rise of translation companies and agencies

Concentration of supply and of processing capacity

One of the most striking worldwide trends in the translation industry over the past ten years has been the development of translation companies both in terms of numbers of companies, and – still more spectacularly – in terms of numbers of employees.

The increase in the numbers of both translation companies proper, and translation brokerage companies and agencies has allowed businesses with translation requirements to concentrate on their own core activities and to outsource anything having to do with multilingualism, and, more particularly, their translation needs – unless it worked the other way round and it is the increase in demand

for translation services which prompted the increase in supply, but the latter is less likely.

This in turn has accelerated the trend towards the industrialisation of translation by concentrating the human resources, the capital, the technology and the special skills required to deal with large-scale translation projects on a rational, industrial basis. Simultaneously, agencies and brokerage companies have concentrated demand on the sub-contracting side of the market and it is a fact that the rise of brokers and agencies as demand concentrators and managers of translation projects has been the most marked evolution in recent years.

The paradox is that this type of business actually thrives in part on the fragmentation of supply and demand. They give work providers access to 'virtual' translation companies, *i.e.* the network of freelance translators working for them and, at the same time, they allow the freelancers to carry on working on large scale contracts that would normally require the kind of equipment, software and specialised skills that would be beyond the scope of an isolated freelance translator. Some agencies even train their sub-contractors in the use of new software tools. Some buy those tools and lend or hire them to their subcontractors. In most cases, agencies have started putting up 'distributed' virtual teams including translators, ICT specialists, information system engineers, infographics specialists, and so on.

In this sense, freelance translators play an active part in the development of companies (and agencies), *albeit* on a temporary basis. And the most remarkable thing about this trend towards increased industrialisation is the fact that the concentration of supply and demand is taking place alongside, and in conjunction with, a system in which many freelancers still feel they are able to maintain some degree of independence since personal contact with their clients remains possible within extremely fragmented markets with everyone trying to build some degree of consistency by using the translation companies, agencies and brokers on an *ad hoc* basis to concentrate demand and to structure their own business.

1.11 Business concentration, mergers and capitalisation

Industrialisation implies a sufficient number of viable production units and viability (in terms of sufficient turnover, return on investment, workload, workforce specialisation and economies of scale, etc.) in turn implies concentration. It is no surprise, therefore, to find ever-larger groups emerging *via* takeovers and mergers, with small-scale operations or 'cells' being kept in place to drain local business and maintain good close business relationships. These small local units put forward their local roots and their flexibility while stressing that they are backed up by the strength of a large, and preferably multinational, group. All the usual modes of business concentration are to be found, *i.e.* minority interest, mergers, subsidiaries, joint ventures, franchises, etc.

The move towards an industrial-type of organisation has aroused particular interest among investors who have been buying up translation companies and more especially the language engineering companies that produce the tools and resources designed for translators, technical writers and other language professionals.

Freelance translators have also been affected by the concentration process, in the sense that virtual pools of particularly effective freelance translators are now emerging: these are particularly sought after by translation companies and agencies for the quality of their work and the fact that they require very little or no revision.

The concentration process is particularly visible in the large-scale agency sector, because such agencies have a worldwide customer base and can farm out contracts to a vast network of sub-contractors generally closely supervised by in-house project managers and whom they provide with the source material, the terminology, the translation memories, and all the necessary ICT tools (generally proprietary software) designed to rationalise, facilitate and improve the translation process, while making it more cost-effective. In many cases, the sub-contracting is divided into the various tasks making up the overall service (*i.e.* translation or proof-reading or disassembly or re-assembly). Interestingly enough, terminology management systems, translation memory management systems, workflow management systems and others were originally developed by such big service companies for their own needs and they then decided to get some return on that investment by selling the systems at large.

Incidentally, for what it's worth, there is a close analogy to be drawn between this model and the one developed, say, in the field of industrial poultry or pig farming, where the animals, feed, buildings, machinery and processes are provided and strictly controlled by the integrating company which pays only for the end products and the operators' skills.

1.12 The rise (and fall?) of the salaried translator

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of salaried translators both in-house and in translation companies and agencies. There was an increase in the number of employers and in the average number of employees.

This was due to the sheer increase in demand for translations but also to the necessity of hiring staff that would cope with editing (quality control of outsourced translations) and management tasks. At the same time, the development of more sophisticated and extended services and of new professional areas and skills fuelled the creation of in-house jobs: the software engineering side of localisation, for instance, is still (for the time being) usually carried out 'in-house' rather than outsourced.

Another powerful reason was that outsourcing and sub-contracting require qualified personnel: someone has to take care of the whole process and make sure everything works out the way it should. Admittedly, the jobs are more on the management side (including project management) and on the quality control side. But such jobs are translation-related and are rightly classified as ‘translation industry jobs’. There was an increase in salaried positions directly or indirectly related to translation (pre-translators, terminologists, editors and revisers, and all kinds of managers). Demand for managers (pre-sales managers, project managers, terminology managers, translation-resource managers, human resources managers, quality managers) keeps growing in-house in response to the vast increase in the numbers of sub-contractors. And special mention must be made of freelance translators who are actually salaried translators ‘in disguise’ in that they have chosen to work for umbrella companies.

The pendulum has thus moved part of the way back in a profession traditionally dominated by freelancers. While it lasted, the expansion in salaried positions provided welcome opportunities for students graduating from the proliferating new undergraduate and postgraduate translation courses. Indeed, many translation graduates entering the profession consider it advisable to gain a few years’ experience in a translation company before trying to earn a living as a freelance translator and, in many cases, translation agencies and companies are the only place where many translation graduates can acquire the real operational skills needed to work as professional translators and that (with a few notable exceptions) their university training has not enabled them to acquire. Translation courses have thus unquestionably provided the steady supply of labour that the budding translation industry needed, and, combined with the increasing ‘mechanisation’ of the activity, indeed led to a relative decline in remuneration levels – though things are shaping up again in that respect.

As we write, the wheel seems to have begun to turn once again: salaried translation as such goes into relative decline as the number of freelancers is sharply on the rise. The cycle is well-known and the reasons are obvious:

- most translation companies now have all the qualified staff they need or, not finding the recruits they would be ready to hire, have decided to wait for better-trained candidates to show up;
- freelance translators now increasingly have access to the skills, know-how and technology which, until recently, were only available in translation companies;
- translation portals and other similar ‘on-line translation markets’ have given freelancers much wider access (at least in theory) to the global translation market;
- translation agencies can manage a whole network of freelance translators with only a few salaried staff, who need not necessarily themselves be translators;

- it is much cheaper and easier to resort to freelance sub-contractors than to face the additional investment, overheads, charges, taxes and red tape that salaried staff usually imply.

As has already been said, a significant number of major translation companies have chosen to reduce the number of their in-house personnel, retaining only the project managers and the commercial department plus those translators who, for technical or commercial reasons or, even more so, for reasons of confidentiality, are absolutely not expendable. This is all the easier as it usually simply means ‘converting’ salaried staff into sub-contractors – former employees keep doing what they used to do in-house, but as self-employed freelancers. This is part of a universal trend whereby individual service providers are expected to bear the costs and risks that the companies are no longer prepared to shoulder.

1.13 A never ending quest for productivity gains

The gradual (or, in some cases, not so gradual) move towards industrialisation is a direct result of the continuing quest for higher productivity, generally (and regrettably) measured in terms of the number of words that a translator can/must translate in a given length of time. This is the driving force behind all the changes we have been describing, but it can also potentially be synonymous with declining quality: in the area of translation, enhanced quality and increased productivity rarely go hand in hand all the way.

1.14 Division of labour and operator specialisation

The division of labour has been made possible by increasing operator specialisation. In order to rationalise work processes and to optimise the work done by each operator, translating is now often segmented into a number of different operations each of which is carried out by a different ‘expert’. This is particularly the case when the provision of a global translation service requires special skills (when, say, an IT specialist extracts the different components of a Web site before translation or a technician cues the time-codes on a video before the subtitles are added). But this kind of specialisation also occurs in large translation companies, where the source material will be broken down or disassembled so that it can be dealt with successively by an information retrieval expert, a terminologist, a translator, a proof-reader, etc.

1.15 The rise of the supervisor (project manager)

‘Supervisors’ are here because of the need to manage workshops and projects or teams and platforms, and more particularly to manage freelance translators working in ‘virtual workshop’ environments. The supervisor is the project manager or job manager or translation interface manager, as the case may be.

1.16 Distance working

The expansion of distance working is another sure sign of the advancing industrialisation of the translation process. Distance working is identified with working from home and this has historically always been one of the key stages in the move from a craft industry to a full-blown industry. Even though translation is of course very rarely carried out on the work provider’s premises (with the exception of translators who may be seconded to the WP’s premises for technical reasons and for enhanced confidentiality) there is now a growing tendency – even for ‘in-house’ translators – to work from home on material provided by the employer, just as weavers in the early days of the industrial revolution used to work at home with yarn provided by the local spinning mill.

In the area of translation, one interesting variant is when several translators working for the same work provider – either within a translation company or as independent freelancers – access the same central translation resources produced and updated by that work provider. In this kind of work set-up, each translator accesses a massive translation memory management system, including dedicated terminology and phraseology resources (specially tailored for the particular client’s needs). This is not infrequently linked in with an information management system (a knowledge base providing access to the customer’s documentation resources and, in some cases, to the relevant information providers and technical experts within the company) or an even more sophisticated Content Management System. And, inevitably, all operators are in the hands of a process-and-operator-control (and management) system with on-line process monitoring designed to ensure the strict observance of dedicated protocols.

This is because many work providers now leave the translator no leeway whatsoever and insist on the systematic and exclusive use of strictly controlled materials, software and procedures. And workflow management makes it possible for the project manager to monitor the translator’s progress against the production schedule so that remedial action can be taken immediately if anyone falls back on schedule. We are thus already witnessing the birth of the ‘virtual translation factory’, which can be entirely outsourced and managed *via* an expanded and secured extranet. This type of work organisation ensures upstream homogenisation of the source materials and procedures, greatly increases the return on investment for

the work provider by avoiding the unnecessary duplication of resources and by putting even further pressure on tariffs, given that *'everything the translator needs is already available and all she/he has to do is translate'*.

1.17 Fierce competition

Competition is getting ever fiercer. There is competition at national level and there is competition at international (global) level. This is mainly so because markets have become a free for all and protections have fallen. Individual translators compete for contracts with translation companies and, above all, it is becoming increasingly the case that the person or company offering to do the job for less does actually provide the same quality of service.

1.18 Niche markets

Like anyone else, operators in the translation markets and, more generally, in the language services markets strive to get a foothold in niche segments. Those are the segments with utmost specialisation in terms of types of materials, domains, technicality, tools or instruments and/or processes, and so on. As in any other activity, once mass production has become a reality, highly skilled craftsmen and, should we say, 'artists' are at an advantage. The niche of niches is when you translate sophisticated material about sophisticated subjects using sophisticated tools. Or should we say: was?

Today, added value in translation service provision comes from what accompanies the translation proper, upstream and downstream (disassembly, reassembly, conversions, integration, finalisation, embedding, graphics, etc.)

Better still; the ultimate in the industry is to go into 'consultancy'. As with any other industrial-type activity, it is possible to make more money at very little risk and with little investment by becoming a consultant. Consultants can advise on anything from documentary policies, setting up linguistic resources, devising a quality plan, implementing quality assurance in translation and/or project management, selecting the people to do the job, and so on, and so forth.

So, now that industrial principles and methods have invaded the scene, translators should consider selling their consultant's know-how, not in translation, but in translation management. The motto could be: *'do not translate; do not manage translation or translators; tell others how to do the translating or, better still, the managing'*.

2. The impact of industrialisation

Industrialisation is synonymous with automation and the application of technological processes requiring rational and standardised operational procedures.

The original impetus comes from the major work providers and/or service providers, who need high volume translation and who have the wherewithal to implement new work organisation procedures: only they have the incentive to make the necessary investments, because they can expect a return in due time. They therefore develop new procedures and tools for their own use, then ask or force their sub-contractors – in particular the translation companies or agencies – to use them. For the translation companies, this is just another investment, especially as some will actually have helped develop the new procedures and tools. At this stage, the new ‘industrial’ procedures and tools start appearing in the most advanced translator training courses where it is anticipated they will soon be standard requirements for future translators. Young translators therefore enter the market with a good knowledge of the procedures and techniques developed and implemented in the industrial segments of the translation market and help disseminate them throughout the profession – no wonder some translation technology vendors sell their products to students at translator training schools at knock-down prices. The new procedures and techniques then spread to the profession as a whole, because more and more contracts clearly specify the use of this or that type of procedure or tool on a ‘take-it-or-leave-it basis’, and because translators find they are losing contracts through lack of competitiveness, or find it more and more difficult to get jobs or to make headway in their career if they do not use them. And, by the time everyone has come to terms with the ‘new’ set-ups and environments, a new raft of protocols and software tools have been developed and soon make their appearance in the ‘industrial’ sectors of the market and the cycle starts all over again. . .

The effects of applying industrial-type processing, procedures, and tools to translation have been as follows throughout the new translation ‘industry’:

1. All professional practices and attitudes have been affected.
2. All of the players are concerned in all domains.
3. Industrialisation is even influencing translation studies and, to a certain extent, creating upheaval in this respect.
4. Companies may now smooth out their workload by calling on a vast pool of freelancers who may, to all intents and purposes, be considered as temporary labour (excluding, of course, those freelancers who work for regular direct clients). This is of utmost importance in a somewhat erratic translation market where the material to be translated is almost never available as planned but

where work providers will nevertheless insist on service providers sticking to the original deadlines.

5. The growing industrialisation of the translation process and translation tools has meant a division of labour and sharing of responsibility along three main lines:
 - a) A division of tasks between various specialised operators working together on a same project (*i.e.* the pre-translator, the terminologist, the translator, the proof-reader and the reviser), which can sometimes cause difficulties in terms of co-ordination and homogeneity;
 - b) A division of responsibilities between brokers and agencies on the one hand and external operators (or sub-contractors) on the other hand. Further divisions can be found when the broker farms out the work to two different service providers: one doing the translation and the other carrying out all the technical operations on compound material prior to and following the translation proper, or when the broker himself carries out whatever operations return higher value-added.
 - c) A division of statuses between the high value-added, high-tech operators on the one hand, who carry out the pre- and post-translation tasks using sophisticated technology and the low or no value-added operators on the other hand, who carry out the translation armed with 'nothing more' than a word processor and what has now become an implicit standard: a translation memory management tool.

Wherever effective, this kind of division has perverse effects, by depriving translators of overall control over their work, and even, in many cases, of an overall vision of the project they happen to be working on. In this case, translators have no contact with either the client or the contractor, or even with the other people working on the same project. They tend to become operators working on a virtual *assembly line* with no one else but the 'online' project manager in touch (and not even in sight). And, apparently, what the future holds in store is the translator translating segments that are pushed or pulled onto his workstation by some workflow management robot with no context at all.

The industrialisation of translation tools and procedures is largely responsible for the appearance and the development of the rift between three separate translation worlds, *i.e.* 'industrial' translation, 'craft' translation, and 'amateur' translation, which coincide with the different markets described in Chapter 4 (*Section 7.8 – Volume (large vs. small markets)*)

- a) The main features of industrial translation (whether completely industrialised or still undergoing the process) are large volumes, multilingual projects,

diverse and complex tools, specific processes and protocols, rational work organisation, rigorous planning, certification, business mergers, etc.

Industrial translation is on the up and will continue to thrive with the increase in translation volumes and the ongoing search for greater rationalisation, productivity gains, and profitability.

- b) Craft translation is not perfectly homogeneous. There are two categories of 'craft' translators: those who keep to tradition and those, far more numerous, who resort to the procedures and tools of industrial translation without compromising in any way on time and costs. The former are usually experienced professionals who work alone, do not like being told what to do, insist on abiding by very strict professional ethics and rules, and wants things to stay that way. The latter are no less experienced professional translators who (a) have adopted the procedures and tools of industrial translation, either by choice or because their survival means sub-contracting for translation companies where such procedures and tools are in standard use and/or (b) are in the process of setting up partnerships with other freelance translators, *via* consortia which take on many different guises, both legally and in the way they are organised, or *via* brokers or agencies, so as to be able to offer the same services as translation companies.

The demise of the craft translator has been regularly trumpeted. The first obituary was in the Van Dijk survey report, commissioned by the European Commission's DG XIII in 1997, which concluded that: *'a reorganisation of the sector in the following years will leave the traditional and 'craftsman' approach little chance to survive.'* And there have been many more since.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, this is perfectly in line with the European Union's rationale, which – quite understandably – emphasises the need for ever greater concentration and industrialisation, and ultimately, in some sectors, automation, as the key to making Europe the world's most competitive and advanced high-tech economy.

Translators have long since heeded the warning. Those who rely on 'niche' markets should not need to worry too much in the immediate future and all those who *are* at risk are already starting to find safety in numbers (as we pointed out above) by forming consortia or partnerships and/or buying the necessary equipment and software, which will move them away from the 'craft' model and closer to the industrial model.

'Craft' translation will to all intents and purposes survive in its most sophisticated 'upmarket' forms. And craft translators will survive, *albeit* on a different scale and model, providing they manage to offer similar services to those offered by translation companies and are able to maintain a favourable price differential as compared to translation companies. However, they are likely to lose out on market share. Ironically, if they want to hold on to

their most lucrative contracts, they will have to copy the principles, the tools, the methods and the procedures of industrial translation. In any case, the work providers (whether they are 'own' clients or translation companies and agencies) will soon make this mandatory, due to the pressures of the race for certification and quality guarantees. Craft translation will therefore have no choice but to 'go industrial' and hope that this does not mean lower rates and more productivity to the detriment of quality.

Those who are not fortunate enough to have their own clients and who, for various reasons, are reluctant to change or incapable of change (which, in this case, usually means embracing technical advances, and not necessarily 'progress' in the sense of greater well-being for the translators involved) will nevertheless have at least to buy and use a translation memory manager. That won't be so difficult since it is a safe bet that, in the not so distant future, word processors will come equipped with built-in full-blown translation memory management functions or, if the market doesn't so warrant, at least with some kind of text-alignment and text-memory management functions.

The archetypal 'small' translator craftsmen – and women – who thrive on translation that requires neither heavy investment nor complex and time-consuming technical operations will survive as long as there are clients looking for customized translations, proximity and direct contact, and for whom cost is not a deterrent.

- c) Amateurism. The amateurs only survive on the fringes of the translation industry and are only mentioned here as a footnote. They will probably not be able to survive much longer, save for the few dozen or few hundred words they may still get to translate now and again and/or unless they are lucky enough to cross the path of work providers who insist on taking nothing but the price/price ratio into consideration and do not care about anything else.

The lessons of history or the lace maker's tale

Once upon a time, there was a lace maker, a real master of her craft, who produced beautiful lace using her own skilfully designed patterns. Having no inclination for business, she decided to let a merchant take care of sales. Soon, the merchant began demanding more and more lace and more and more intricate patterns ... for the same money.

Fair enough. She worked in the morning; she worked in the evening; she worked at night. She worked Sundays. And she found ways to speed up her production. Then, the merchant said she should go easy on intricacies and concentrate on standard patterns – those that were the more popular (he surely forgot to mention they were the more profitable for him). So the lace maker started using templates and patterns and designs and card stocks provided by the merchant. Productivity increased alright. And so did sales.

But that was still too expensive and left no 'margin', the merchant soon said. So, he decided she would just 'finish' semi-finished laces that someone using a new-fangled mechanical device would churn out by the dozen. She didn't like that, but she had to make a living, hadn't she? And leave the creativeness to others. Then, there was talk of mechanisation, rationalisation, organisation, automation, standardisation, productivity: ROI and customer satisfaction all said. And, soon, there was no more lace making for her anyway: the merchant had set-up a lace-making workshop with ever so clever workflow management. With a heavy heart, she went up to the workshop at the 'lace factory' where she worked 10 hours a day under the beady eye of the supervisor at the foot of machines that relentlessly reproduced those designs 'created' and 'improved' (streamlined, she thought she heard someone say; but that might have been about something else) by a young woman who had once been her apprentice and now had a degree (an engineering degree, of course) and knew all about standards and procedures and QA and QC. It was even rumoured that she had invented a device that would do away with factory operatives altogether. Oh! And she had been a consultant, she had told them, in some far away country, where there were thousands of women with astonishing lace making skills, and willing to work for far less than anyone here would want to be paid. But that meant nothing to the lacemaker. Until, one morning, the machines were gone...

3. Industrialisation as a policy objective

Policy-makers are no doubt quite happy to see translation moving towards industrial-type procedures and structures. Many see the rise of a full-blown translation industry (or language industry as they say in Canada, or multilingual communication industry) as a central objective, which will help to protect and increase market share for their own national translators in a given politically or economically important arena – generally the whole world if the language combinations involved include the most commonly used international languages. But a truly national translation industry, capable of winning market shares, requires:

- business concentration (*via* companies with a solid financial and organisational base), and the disappearance of the weakest and most isolated operators,
- the reinforcement of the strongest operators' potential,
- more language combinations (especially in officially bilingual or multilingual countries),
- support to help win new markets abroad (especially when the price differential is unfavourable),

- the development of language resources for the translation companies concerned,
- the development of language engineering projects designed for the translation industry,
- incentives towards greater rationalisation, combining quality and productivity gains,
- increased professional specialisation, both in translator training courses and for practising translators, in order to stay ahead in the race for the most lucrative markets.

The overall objective is both to meet domestic translation needs and to give domestic translation industry operators the support they need to face up to international competition. With this support, not only will all the sectors that need translation (the social services, the legal system, the health services, businesses, government, the entertainment industry, etc.) find the quality they should be entitled to, but the national translation industry as a whole will be able to save jobs and develop employment in a rapidly changing global context, thus cushioning some of the effects of globalisation.

From the village to the globe

Dotcom, dotbiz, and dotnet are homeless, ruthless, and heartless: they just do business...

Anyone's reaction to the globalisation of the translation markets varies very much according to the nature of the market concerned.

Translation companies involved in the major markets (*e.g.* thousands of pages to be translated into a dozen or so languages) already work in a worldwide and essentially offshore marketplace. They are the major beneficiaries of globalisation, and still stand to gain, insofar as:

- they can find translators in any language they need, and can more often than not take advantage of very competitive local rates;
- clients with these kinds of needs are looking for a comprehensive service available through a 'one-stop-shop' and are definitely not prepared to waste precious time and resources looking for and managing a team of translators, more especially if those translators are disseminated all over the world. Companies and agencies with subsidiaries or joint ventures in other countries are therefore in the running for this kind of comprehensive 'global' service.

It is therefore no surprise to find most translation companies now busy establishing networks, both at home and abroad, in order to guarantee maximum – and, if possible, global – commercial coverage by getting closer to where the demand is.

One result of globalisation, as far as the translation industry is concerned, is that companies, not markets, will be relocated. Companies will, most likely, set up local commercial 'offices' and small translation units as close as possible to major prospects and clients. Companies and agencies make the whole world their hunting ground for contracts, and then farm out the work according to the languages and the cultures involved. In other words, they are globalising their commercial network while 'localising' the actual translation work.

The local aspect of supply is vital in the translation industry. Having material translated can often be quite a stressful experience, especially if the work provider feels incapable of checking the quality of the translated material and/or is uneasy over confidentiality issues. What work providers therefore want is to be able to deal with someone they feel is trustworthy, who shares the same language and

culture and if possible, is physically close enough to be contacted personally. They are not necessarily interested in knowing that the actual translating is being done hundreds or thousands of miles away, and no one will tell them anyway.

Mid-market translators will probably see quite a few changes due to globalisation, but need not necessarily be adversely affected. It is safe to assume that these markets will be at least partly affected by off-shoring, simply because it is quite natural that any material should be translated in a country whose national (or regional) language is the target language of translation. Clients who cannot find the relevant (competent) native language translators in their own country will naturally seek those translators in a country where people speak the target language. However, the offshore markets should, to a certain extent, balance themselves out by language and country pairs, simply because any language combination necessarily works both ways. In any case, it now appears obvious that there is such a thing as a virtual international market where most translators are offshore operators most of the time. This means that if you translate from Spanish into Chinese, you are better off getting contracts from work providers the world over than from just Spain or China, if only because higher rates can be obtained outside Spain and outside China.

As regards the lower end of the market (*i.e.* translations of 3 to 10 or 50 pages or so), no radical changes are to be expected, and the above balance between languages will prevail simply because it is hardly cost-effective to start looking for 'offshore' translators for such small contracts, unless, of course, the strategic importance of the translation is such that it warrants seeking out the best translator for the job, irrespective of the cost. And this means it has to be of utmost strategic importance.

Globalisation may then lead to a certain degree of redistribution of work between translators, between companies, and between countries without having a major effect on the total volume of translations carried out in any given country. Major effects would primarily be on prices and rates and, in any case, the effects depend on who you are.

Work providers – including translation companies and agencies that subcontract work to other operators – are now able to (a) have their translations done systematically in a target language/culture country, and/or (b) save money by taking advantage of cost differentials from one country to another.

Translators – including translation companies and agencies for work done 'in-house' – may (a) find contracts abroad, and/or (b) benefit from cost differentials if they work in a low-cost country for clients located in high-cost countries, or, on the contrary, (c) lose out if they are working in a high-cost country for clients located in low-cost countries.

One possible decision on the part of translators would be to charge the rates that apply in the 'source' country or 'country of demand' irrespective of their

own geographical location. Translators in low-rate-low-cost countries would then inevitably desert their local/national markets and move on to 'richer pastures' on the international market. This would, in turn, open up the cheap local markets for graduates to flex their muscles until they feel that they are able to internationalise their own markets and tariffs. In theory, this would safeguard the interests of those who charge normal rates while providing those from low-cost countries with improved incomes. In practice this is probably no more than wishful thinking.

Pessimists may argue that alongside its positive effects (*i.e.* the situation in which new market shares are won) and its neutral effects (*i.e.* the situation in which transfers from one language to another balance each other out) globalisation may, or will inevitably lead to market distortions and disruptions. This negative effect (in the view of the least competitive operators) is due to a very simple fact of economic life which states that, when faced with a choice between two globally similar translation services, one of which is cheaper than the other, the client will always opt for the cheaper of the two, providing (a) the cost differential is sufficient to warrant using the services of an 'offshore' operator, (b) the volumes concerned are sufficiently large to make it worth their while and (c) the fact that the translator is offshore does not prevent the work provider from monitoring the work in progress and does not lead to a breach of trust between the client and the service provider. If these conditions are met, clients will find it tempting to look for someone abroad who can provide the same quality of service they can find at home, at a fraction of the cost. The chances are, anyway, that all major work providers have been approached by translators and translation companies who have already moved to low-cost offshore environments. Short of enforcing global wage, welfare and social security standards, there is not much anyone can do about this, except gain solace from the fact that the advertising and promotional material displayed on the worldwide Web by a number of these budding offshore operators are sometimes dire enough to put off even the most undemanding clients.

The search for quality at lower cost is in itself perfectly legitimate. More worrying for all concerned are the cases where the cost differential is artificially created and maintained. Things are not very different in this respect from the situation in the domestic market. Fair competition ceases whenever:

- inferior quality is offered at the same price;
- work providers deliberately refuse to pay a fair rate for the job;
- competitors deliberately undercut each others' prices;
- competitors underpay (and exploit) their own staff and/or their sub-contractors.

In the first instance, the work provider is at fault for not being more careful. In the second case, he deliberately practises some form of exploitation. As for the last two instances, they are blatant cases of unfair competition. At the international

level, the only answer, from the translators' perspective, would be (a) to stress that quality is at risk if low cost becomes the one and only criterion and (b) to encourage translators in all countries where translation is just emerging to charge any client the rate he would have to pay in her/his own country, knowing that this is probably not realistic.

All being said, however, optimists keep saying that globalisation is probably no more of a threat for any particular translator than are unfair competition and underpayment at the national level. But pessimists favour a different scenario.

In fact, some operators among the heavyweights predict that the market is about to undergo a complete upheaval. Translation, they say, just like any other kind of production process, will inevitably be attracted towards the low-cost countries. This will mean that:

- any translator wanting to work for a work provider who has successively bid for a contract in a low-cost country will have to accept the going rate for translations in that country or have to turn down the job, as illustrated in the following job offer issued by a Singapore based company:¹⁵

Bidders must live in: France

In the next few years, we are going to have regular translation projects to do for our client which is specialized in producing Home Appliance User Manuals for such electronic giants as JVC, Sony, etc. Translators must meet the following criteria in order to be given a testing:

1. Accept the fee of US\$0.05/EURO0.06
2. Having at least 5 years of experience in technical translation in Electronics (NOT IT);
3. Using Trados in your work;
4. Accept our standard payment practice (payment being made once every three months);

Please send in your CV to Kent at xx.com ASAP

Contact person: XX

Company: T & C Centre

URL: <http://www.xx.com>

- translations into a given target language will systematically end up in the lowest cost country (or countries), and it is the translators themselves who will have to go offshore (in effect or virtually) if they want to hold on to certain markets.

15. For obvious reasons, all real names and clues to identification have been changed. The rest of the transcript is perfectly genuine, including the spelling mistakes.

What it all boils down to is that the market could not care less where the translator chooses to live, as long as she/he practises 'offshore' rates.

Offshore is where the sharks are

This chapter would hardly be complete without mentioning the kind of offers received by a number of translators, including the present author. The following example is a perfect illustration of the type of 'outlaw' outfits now operating in the business. It should be remembered that the lowest translation rates in France at the time were three times the level mentioned here.

We are an off-shore company planning to set up a world-wide network of part-time high quality translators. At present, we already have 550 registered members, covering some 47 languages and 119 specialist domains.

We are contacting you because we found your e-mail address on your personal Web site or because it was forwarded to us by an acquaintance of yours.

If you decide to work for us, you will not be bound by any kind of agreement and may decide to stop working for us at any time. Any work completed will be paid for and our business arrangement will come to an end.

It is understood that any work you do for us is occasional and is not deemed to be salaried employment.

You will never be directly in contact with the client requesting the translation: we shall be your only contact.

Payment rates: standard work (*quote*), 0.046 euro per words (*quote*) in the source text. Example: a standard promotional brochure of ten pages or so usually contains around 2,500 words. If we send you more than 10,000 words to translate, the rate will be 0.03 euro per word over and above 10,000. If on the other hand the client wants the work done very quickly (in less than 24 hours), your payment will be increased by 0.015 euro per word.

Proof-reading and correction of texts already translated will be paid on the basis of 0.046 euro per group of 10 words.

As we are an off-shore company, payment will be free of tax. You will be paid in cash in the currency of your choice. This will guarantee maximum discretion as regards the tax authorities and your present employer. If you prefer payment in kind, we can arrange for the sums due to be paid through orders on the Web site of your choice. In this case, just tell us what you want to buy and where you want it delivered and we will see that the goods are ordered. You may also request payment by bank transfer to the account of your choice.

Sums over 100 euros will be forwarded to you automatically.

If you agree to work for us, we may contact you through three different channels:

When a client wants work done, we will phone your mobile phone or fixed line phone number to check whether you are available to do the job. We can also contact you by e-mail if you prefer or if you cannot be reached by phone. The source material will be sent to you by e-mail only. You will return it to us by e-mail also once the work is completed.

Cash payments will be sent to you by post in an unobtrusive and securely sealed envelope, with acknowledgement of receipt.

We will send you a monthly e-mail to check whether you wish to continue working for us.

You may get others to work for you on given jobs. You will be responsible for the quality of their work and for any payment due to them. You alone will be our contact for a given job. However, we invite you to forward the names of anyone who might be likely to want to work directly for us.

An overall quality grade will be awarded to each job of work you do for us. This will take into consideration the client's comments, the speed at which the work was completed and our general business relationship.

We give priority to those who are awarded the highest assessment grades. If you sub-contract work to acquaintances, their work will be assessed as if it were your own.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Are you interested in our offer?

If so, then please complete the form below so we can add you to our data base. It goes without saying that your personal details will not be forwarded to anyone else.

PERSONAL DETAILS:

NAME:

FIRST NAME:

PERSONAL POSTAL ADDRESS:

POST CODE and CITY:

COUNTRY:

PERSONAL MOBILE PHONE OR FIXED LINE NUMBER:

PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESS:

Present PROFESSION or ACTIVITY:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPOKEN AND WRITTEN PERFECTLY (other than French):

SPECIAL DOMAIN EXPERTISE in that language (ex. medical English):

PROOF OF COMPETENCE for this kind of work:

TIME you think you can spend on this kind of work per week:

Thanks for having spent time reading all this.

In the hope that we will be working together very soon.

SECTION VI

Training translators

Training translators

Introduction

There have never been as many university courses and programmes in translation as there are today and the time has therefore come to have a long hard think about the challenges we face in training future translators and about possible ways of meeting these challenges.

To many people, the very idea of training translators is nonsensical. All you need to do, they say, is to wait for translators to emerge naturally, like so many mushrooms, from among the linguists, by vocation or by accident.

But this argument is no longer sustainable: obviously, there are just not enough spontaneously generated translators around to meet market demands both in technical translation and literary translation as the number of literary translation courses that have sprung up over the last few years would suggest.

If the axiom that translators trained ‘on the job’ are necessarily good translators is patently untrue (that claim being mostly made by people whose own work is more often than not substandard) it is just as absurd to pretend that anyone who has graduated with a degree in translation will necessarily make a good translator. There are brilliant translators in both categories and there are mediocre translators in both categories

Everyone agrees that there is indeed a need to train translators to meet existing demand and also to face rising volumes in the future, but there should also be agreement on the need to train *good* translators and to train them *well*. This is a bigger challenge than many would think since the situation today is too many translation graduates not finding employment and too many employers or companies not finding the right translators (meaning ‘suitable’ for the jobs or contracts).

1. Course objectives and profiles

It is high time academics stopped pretending the design of translator training courses is a complicated matter. After many years of well-informed debate, ev-

everyone now knows what the contents and methods should be, and those who do not should not really be attempting to set up courses at all.

What we now know is that whatever their background, translators must (1) master their working languages perfectly (*i.e.* be able to understand the slightest detail and subtle shade of meaning of the material for translation and be able to write clearly and fluently in the target language or languages), (2) be perfectly familiar with every kind of documentation, information retrieval and data research technique, (3) be at home with terminology and phraseology mining and management (4) have at least a layman's knowledge of a wide range of subjects in the fields of science, technology, economics, etc., (5) master all the translation-localisation (and revision) techniques, methods and procedures, (6) be totally proficient in the use of all the equipment and software they are likely to come across in their professional environments, (7) be familiar with best professional practice and professional ethics, (8) have some knowledge of commercial and financial management, (9) have some experience of project management and (10) be able to communicate and interact efficiently and amiably with a variety of people.

Translator recruitment profiles (*i.e.* the sum of generic and specific skills and competences required) can easily be identified by:

- looking up job offers,
- analysing task outlines,
- analysing the recruitment criteria defined by the future employers (in particular by translation agencies and companies looking for translators on the Internet),
- analysing translators' working environments – preferably by actually working there,
- analysing the markets,
- talking to translation service or company managers,
- analysing reports by students just out of their internships (probably the most fruitful resource in terms of impending market and technical/methodological changes),
- analysing market trends to anticipate any future changes, thus preparing to introduce new course components or modify existing ones.

A survey of job advertisements in the field of translation (over 120 advertisements, irrespective of country or language) carried out in 2005 as a follow-up to a 2002 survey produced the following list of expectations on the part of employers (in decreasing order of priority):

1. Language skills (most obviously):

- a perfect knowledge of the relevant working languages (100% of the jobs advertised). Language pair(s) and direction of translation are relevant in all cases.

2. Knowledge of specific translation tools (now mentioned in **all** job ads):

- proficiency in the use of an application that the company or organisation has already purchased but does not know how to implement or use efficiently, or
- proficiency in the use of an application required by a particular work provider (e.g. computer graphics, desk-top publishing, specific software used to produce and process the material to be translated), or
- proficiency in the use of software localisation and multimedia translation tools – usually couched as *‘IT skills will be particularly appreciated’*

3. Qualifications:

- A degree in translation (almost all require postgraduate qualifications; about one in ten wants technical experts and one in thirty is looking for ‘technical experts trained in translation’)
- A degree awarded by a recognised training institution.

In most countries, job advertisements identify just a few institutions with ‘similar profiles and priorities’ known to produce graduates who should fit the requirements for the job.

Academic background and training, along with language combinations, seem to be the main recruitment criteria for in-house translators, but all candidates are expected to take a confirming test anyway.

4. Knowledge of quality control procedures (mentioned in just over half of the job ads).

5. Particular competences, such as technical writing, revision, terminology management, pre-translation, network management, Web page design, etc. (40% of job ads).

6. Project management (35%)

- In-house project management: this can include choosing the appropriate translation assistance and machine translation tools, and training the translators in the use of such tools.
- Sub-contractor management, *i.e.* acting as prime contractor for the work provider.

7. Specific ability to handle non standard translations (15%)

- Specific technical knowledge and skills required to handle and translate unconventional material – usually phrased as: *‘IT skills appreciated’* or *‘experience in the area of software localisation appreciated’*

8. Experience in the field of translation (15%)

Again, prior experience in translation is considered less important than domain-specific knowledge or proficiency in the use of specific technology.

The lesson to be drawn from this survey can be summed up as follows:

- the market is wide open for beginners who have graduated with the **right training for the job** (meaning ‘trained to meet market requirements and beyond’) **and** who have had the chance to see professional practice at first hand through long, real work placements (*i.e.* placements lasting several months and involving real tasks),
- technical skills and competence are very much in demand: familiarity with the latest technological developments is a must, particularly where older-generation translators are still the majority, and many graduates are in fact expected to act as technological gap-bridgers,
- there is no end of opportunities for translators with real expertise in quality assurance and project management.

The market is also eager to take on people who are trained in one or several of the special skills areas (one might say sub-jobs) associated with translation, such as software, Web site and videogame localisation, technical writing, multilingual content management, terminology, post-editing or revision.

If we compare the findings above with **offers** for student **internships** (which look more and more like **requests** for high-profile interns) addressed to universities offering translator training programmes, an even clearer picture emerges. The offerers/requesters are looking for students:

- who are in the final stages of getting a master’s degree in translation – which is supposed to be sufficient guarantee that they can translate, proofread, manage terminology, etc.
- who have a perfect knowledge of translation memory management systems and various automatic systems,
- who are capable of drawing up specifications for a project – including the equipment, software resources, documentation and terminology required,
- who know how to customize and optimize their work station,
- who have received training in localisation and multimedia translation techniques,
- who know about quality management and quality control,
- who are familiar in a practical way with project management.

To give a complete picture, it must be said that whole market segments now tend to exclude beginner freelancers altogether because revision has become so costly that only autonomous translators (*i.e. translators requiring no or extremely little revision*) get the jobs or contracts. This started with translation agencies and is now spreading fast. Beginners thus have little choice but to try and find their way into agencies where they are confined to LSO (Linguistic Sign Off) and file management. Consequently, training institutions whose graduates head for the freelance markets are now under pressure, not only to equip students with all the knowledge, skills, and know-how that ‘autonomy’ requires, but to give them the opportunity to acquire experience and a range of special skills during their course, in particular through protracted skills labs and long work placements. This again raises the question of which special skills to introduce and the degree of specialisation possible and desirable in university translator training programmes.

By combining the results of the two above surveys, the following translator qualification and competence profile emerges. A **trained** translator should be someone who:

- has graduated from an institution whose *alumni* have a good track record in the field of professional translation,
- has actually **begun** to specialise in one of the areas in demand (as substantiated by work actually done at university or in the course of skills labs and work placements and not simply by just a few translations done to satisfy course requirements);
- is proficient in technical writing and ‘content management’;
- is proficient in terminology applied to translation, and in particular in the use of terminology management systems;
- has a good knowledge of specialised phraseology and controlled language design and implementation, in particular in the context of translation memory systems;
- knows where and how to find the relevant information needed for any given translation;
- is proficient in the use of office IT and desktop-publishing applications;
- is at home with Internet-related tools (e-mail, Web sites, file management servers, Web forums, search engines, referencing protocols, etc.);
- knows how to use and even adapt and develop data base management systems;
- is familiar with Electronic Data Management, mark-up languages and data modelling protocols (XML/XSL/SML);
- is proficient in the use of translation memory management systems;
- is familiar with proof-reading and revision techniques (including post-editing of computer assisted translations);

- can actually assist translation project managers if need arises and even take over in time;
- is familiar with standard technological and software environments associated with the processes of document production and document lifecycling.

This has now become the standard translator's job profile. On top of that, each position advertised usually implies at least one 'extra' competence that defines the profile as that required for a 'job' in its own right – whether it be localiser, multimedia translator, technical translator possibly in a specialist area, technical writer or translator or any combination of the above.

The aim is not, of course, to train students for a narrowly defined market, but, quite to the contrary, to empower them to apply for a wide range of positions in the translation **industry** or, alternatively, to open up their market potential as freelancers. Taken in its broadest sense, translator training therefore draws on the following (unprioritized) subject fields, with corresponding outcomes:

- one or more source languages/cultures
Outcome = ability to understand and analyse materials in the slightest detail, whatever the language, the code, and the medium
- one or more target languages/cultures
Outcome = perfect mastery of expression and writing (including proofreading),
- translation and transfer skills and, more generally, intercultural management:
Outcome = deliverable quality translations of relevant types of materials (with good abilities for stylistic fluency and writing efficiency in the target language)
- general-purpose technical knowledge
Outcome = a foundation of technical knowledge applicable across the board
- specific technical fields that are deemed relevant
Outcome = specific knowledge as a basis for translation and technical writing,
- information mining, retrieval and management
outcome = ability to spot relevant resources plus ability to get hold of any information required, by whatever means and in various media
- interview and negotiation techniques,
Outcome = ability to obtain relevant information; ability to interact efficiently with all kinds of partners, colleagues, information providers, assistants, etc.
- IT (as a subject in itself),
Outcome = mastery of formats, languages, platforms; good knowledge of software development; ability to develop macros and applications
- IT (as an ever-growing set of tools),
Outcome = mastery of all technology available in a state-of-the-art translator's work station; ability to analyse and appraise any software package; ability to train colleagues and others in the use of such tools

- IT (applied to translation at large, including translation project management),
outcome = ability to choose the right IT for any task and/or to develop or customize it, then to implement and use it or have it used properly by others
- terminology and terminography,
Outcome = ability to find the required terminology; ability to create and maintain relevant terminological resources; ability to choose/develop/customize and implement relevant terminographic aids and tools
- phraseology and phraseography,
Outcome = ability to find the required phraseology; ability to create and maintain relevant phraseological resources; ability to choose/develop/customize and implement relevant phraseographic aids and tools
- proof-reading and revision,
Outcome = ability to upgrade (human and assisted) translations and/or any material with linguistic components to required quality levels; ability to choose/develop/modify and implement relevant aids and tools
- commercial (client portfolio) management,
Outcome = ability to produce viable estimates and commercial offers and to generally manage all commercial interaction with prospects and clients
- commercial and financial management,
Outcome = good knowledge and perception of the financial implications of jobs, contracts, projects; ability to calculate, obtain, and manage budgets (notably, costs)
- project planning and management.
outcome = ability to plan and manage projects (specifications, schedules and deadlines, costs, human resources, equipment, reviews, etc.); ability to constantly update and upgrade skills and competences; ability to manage quality throughout the material's lifecycle and translation workflow
and much more, as the case may be.

The skills profiles required by those agencies and brokers with permanent job offers or ongoing searches for freelancers on the Web are very similar to those listed above, except that they place more emphasis on prior experience (on the assumption that anyone who has survived for any length of time as a practising translator is deemed to have the necessary capabilities) and do not specify project management skills as such (because project managers' jobs are often advertised separately in the somewhat unreasonable hope of attracting people with 'proper' business management degrees). The agencies and brokers are primarily interested in (1) particularly valuable specialisms and domain expertise – which they can find by sub-contracting translation work directly or indirectly to domain experts – (2) the rarer language combinations, (3) significant IT skills and competences – as indicated through the impressive lists of required software. At the same time, they

are primarily concerned with the payment levels **expected** by any translators they might employ.

Employment markets are changing – as confirmed by a recent survey (CFTTR 2004) of translation agencies and freelancers. The difference lies with the distribution of skills and competences. There are, in fact, four notable changes.

1. The number of freelancers is sharply on the rise, both because outsourcing is becoming the rule and because the crowds of graduates can in no way be absorbed by existing companies, agencies, bureaus, in-house services, and various institutions.
2. To take care of the huge mass of freelance translations, agencies and brokers are increasingly hiring translators (and others) with proven abilities to buy and sell translation, to manage projects, and to take care of all kinds of quality checks.
3. Specialisation by ‘job’ + technology + domain (job first) is a marked major trend. This means that translators identify themselves primarily as localisers (of software packages, of Web site contents, of video games, etc.) or dubbers, or subtitlers, or revisers.
4. Conversely, there are also more and more professionals who are in charge of anything that has to do with international communication in one particular small or medium-sized company. This, as already stated, involves translation, interpreting, deciding on equipment and strategies, building and managing terminology databases, creating the translation memories, finding and managing the subcontracting translators/technical writers, writing the documentation, updating the Web site with international content, and so on and so forth.

All in all, this means that **all** of the above-mentioned skills and competences come into play and that the circumstances of their being put to work call for ever-increasing **specialisation**. That, in any case, is inescapable. . . and challenging. The problem is that no one can predict the combination that will prevail for any individual student. This being so, recent surveys confirm that students entering translator-training courses must now increasingly be prepared to go freelance right away or to become project managers/translation quality assurance managers and, in any case, to give priority to anything that goes by the name of ‘localisation’.

2. Course components

On the basis of the learning outcomes detailed above, we can now list 13 ‘core’ domains of study:

-
- source language(s),
 - target language(s),
 - specific domains or subject areas,
 - comprehension and analysis of materials to be translated (per type, and individually),
 - information mining, retrieval, and management
 - writing/development skills,
 - terminology for translation/translators,
 - phraseology for translation/translators,
 - IT skills,
 - translation skills 1
 - general translation,
 - translation skills 2
 - specialised translation,
 - specific domains (legal, financial, technical, with subdivisions),
 - multimedia,
 - software/Web site/videogame localisation
 - proof-reading and revision,
 - project management and quality management
 - planning,
 - financial management,
 - resource management.

Each course component has to be considered from three different viewpoints:

- skills, competences, techniques,
- instruments and tools,
- best practice and ethics – behaviour and attitudes.

From those elements, it is possible to build up a general course architecture around the backbone of translation seen as the core of a service provision task with any number of operations and activities organised along a critical path, with clearly-identified pre-requisites and follow-ups.

The critical path approach means the necessary skills and competences are acquired according to a certain rationale, namely that:

1. Language skills need to be mastered *before* attempting translation and therefore prior to entering the translation course proper.
2. Each specific translation skill and competence should be acquired *before* it is actually called on in that part of the translation process to which it applies.

3. Students are never put in a position where they would have to complete tasks that are plainly beyond their reach, even with proper guidance – meaning, for instance, a student is not asked to use a translation memory manager unless proper training has been provided or no one is asked to translate a document if he or she can in no way be reasonably expected to get hold of the information needed to understand what it is all about.
4. Translation skills are acquired gradually. The students thus work up:
 - a. through different types of materials,
 - b. for each type, through growing levels of specialisation,
 - c. for each type/level combination, from draft translations to deliverable products, with all possible combinations of quantity and quality requirements in between.
5. The full course spans as long a time period as possible, 3 years being a minimum if work placements are to have any relevance.

It then remains to add the truly professional dimension, by calling on practising professionals, by simulating real-life conditions in skills labs and by introducing mandatory work placements (the optimal ratio of overall tuition to in-company work experience is generally thought to be around 3 to 1 – which means a total of twelve months work experience for a course lasting three years).

But beyond the skills and competences listed above, what is really important is not only to train translators who will be capable of meeting all the challenges they are likely to face in a professional context once they leave university, but people who will be able to meet the technological challenges that they will inevitably face ten years later. Each technological **generation** is now thought to last no more than three to four years, which means that translators may have to face at least three major changes per decade. Given that technology now has a major impact on professional strategies and practices and on the relationship the translator entertains with colleagues and partners, this raises major (dizzying) questions about how technological issues should be addressed within a translator-training course.

This is why all future graduates need to be given some insight into the theories underlying current developments in translation studies and be introduced to research principles, so they can reflect on ways of making sure that translators, who are highly trained ‘natural intelligence’ specialists, are not turned into mere ‘operatives’ in an increasingly automated translation process.

3. The training process

Translator training should combine methodology and theory on the one hand and practical experience on the other, in a teaching/learning process based on hands-on experience and guidance.

As translation is primarily related to know-how, the learning process must be similar to that of skilled craftsmen, who first learn their craft by watching and working alongside others and then being closely tutored as they move on to practice. The future translator needs to acquire the necessary knowledge and competence in the first stages of training, to be guided during the actual translation process, and to receive feedback through correction or revision afterwards – revision being a major opportunity to learn what went wrong, and why, but also to confirm what worked out well. In that respect, any institution that purports to train translators must have the human, financial and material resources needed to ensure that students get a chance to translate several hundred pages a year, and should therefore ideally have a staff-student ratio approaching 1 to 5 – admittedly a pipe-dream in this day and age.

As translator training should primarily be based on hands-on tuition and experience, it is being radically affected by the use of new learning and teaching environments. This is particularly true of ICT in the learning process: given that translation work is now almost entirely dependent on information technology, the student's workstation must be a real translator's workstation. In some training institutions, the student's workstation is even two or three steps ahead of the average professional's, with the students themselves doing the developments and customisation.

4. Specialisation

As we have already pointed out several times, it is unreasonable to expect graduates fresh out of a university translator training course to be specialised in any true sense of the word. In fact, graduates with a too narrowly defined specialisation would run the risk of being excluded from certain market sectors on the grounds that their specialist profiles would not fit in. However, all students should be prepared and ready to specialise – by domain and/or type of material and/or medium and/or translation technology – as soon as possible, although the choice of a specialist field will depend very much on demand and on the circumstances.

We must however, be careful to define what we mean by 'specialisation'. We believe that translators should actually acquire **real, extensive, proven expertise** in:

- two or more domains (*e.g.* telecommunications¹⁶),
- and/or in certain kinds of media,
- and/or a particular ‘job’ or technique (*e.g.* localisation or subtitling).

In a university context, specialisation should be limited to the acquisition of what might be called the ‘transversal’ skills upon which students will later build their true specialisations in terms of domains, techniques, media, types of materials, and even ‘jobs’. To achieve this, the translator’s basic training should therefore allow her/him to:

- meet **all the requirements** in the job profiles listed above,
- acquire a basic understanding of **mainstream technical fields** such as electricity, physics, mechanical engineering, computer science, telecommunications, process regulation, monitoring systems, thermodynamics, etc.),
- be familiar with the main generic translation ‘specialisations’ considered in terms of specific markets, *i.e.* translation for publishing, legal translation, multimedia translation or software localisation,
- have complete mastery of the different translation techniques which apply to:
 - text,
 - audiovisual material,
 - Web site contents,
 - software, video games, and the like,
 - video and movies.

Anyone graduating with the skills and knowledge listed above would actually qualify as a **proficient and professional all-round ‘general translator’** and be ready to **rapidly specialise** in one or several of the fields, techniques or types of materials explored during the course, without having to catch up on any heavy deficiencies.

Ideally, anyone graduating from a translator training course should also be qualified in any of the other professional skills found in the translation industry, *i.e.* terminography and terminology management, technical writing, Web site and Web page design, webmastering, etc., either as an operator or as a project manager.

It is then up to each institution to decide on the additional professional skills areas best fitted to the markets, or, if the markets, the resources or the motivation are not there, to choose to concentrate on ‘text’ translation.

16. This field is a perfect example of the dangers of early specialisation. Telecommunications was considered in the 1990s as the *Eldorado* of the translation business, but it rapidly became a disaster area when there was a sudden reversal of fortunes in the industry. The lesson to be learned is that translators and companies should be wary of slavishly following stock market trends.

What actually happens in many cases is that training institutions have managed to bypass the specialisation issue on the grounds that:

1. they **do not have to feel concerned** about professional specialisation. Universities are no vocational schools: they are the place for research and theory. Specialisation is something the students will acquire through work placements or during the first few months of professional practice;
2. they may be satisfied with giving the students **overviews** of a variety of special fields, *e.g.* accountancy, electricity, mechanical engineering, measurement techniques, hydraulics, means of payment, control systems, transport, drilling, pumping, industrial safety, and so on. Students will then put that to advantage any way they decide to.
3. the institution has no responsibility beyond giving future translators an introduction to information retrieval techniques and strategies – so they can look after themselves once they start practising as translators.

When they do include some degree of specialisation in the course, in a laudable attempt to increase their graduates' employment prospects, most institutions tend to focus on the same fields and domains. Training profiles (in terms of competence, know-how and social skills) are all too often simply equated with the fields or domains where the skills, know-how and social skills are, or will be, applied.

In fact, skills and competences which used to be considered as 'specialist skills' are now more often than not included in the basic translator job profile, and employers expect far more of beginners than used to be the case only a few years ago. Translation markets are now so diverse – diversification and industrialisation being the two most significant developments which have affected the translation profession and industry these past few years – that translators starting out on a career in the profession must be prepared to face any situation and able to cope. Translation skills are of course a pre-requisite, but so (increasingly) are computer skills and 'special' skills including subtitling (up to a point), Web site cloning, Web site localisation, video game localisation, and so on. It goes almost without saying that the translator will also be expected to have some experience of technical, legal and economic and commercial translation. . . and even to be reasonably proficient at interpreting (at least liaison and consecutive interpreting). Even the beginner, straight out of university, is now often expected to be immediately operational in all these areas simply because requirements have changed and the conditions for employability have changed accordingly.

5. Assessing learning outcomes

Devising tools and procedures to assess the professional skills and competences that students have mastered at the end of a translator training course is one of the main challenges of designing and running such a course.

Anyone in charge of a translation programme has to be aware of the danger, in relatively narrow markets, of awarding qualifications in translation to students who do not have the necessary skills and competences, and who may therefore jeopardize the chances of future competent graduates by clogging the market.

The issue also has to be considered across the board: all university translator training institutions are jointly responsible for maintaining the quality standards which can alone help stem the tide of unfair competition and enhance the image of the profession in the eyes of the general public and work providers.

The onus is therefore on translator trainers – including both the academics in charge of the courses and any practising professionals who may be called upon to deliver some of the modules – not only to design and deliver the most relevant courses but also to define and apply the most rigorous *professionally based* quality standards when awarding qualifications to future translators. Another pipe dream perhaps?

And those who still argue that the marketplace will rapidly weed out the least able should be aware by now that this is unfortunately just not true. A frequent complaint from applicants who have failed admission tests into second-year master courses on account of an impressive number of mistakes is *‘I don’t understand, because I already translate professionally and my clients never complain about my work’*.

It is vital that students be assessed at the end of their course on the same basis as when they apply for jobs in the translation industry or try to win contracts (except that experience and certain job-specific criteria do not come into play).

It is high time for those academics who have put (or found) themselves in charge of translator training courses to get together to agree on **common basic** standards providing that any qualifications awarded to future translators would:

- be defined jointly by those in charge of professionally oriented translation courses, after due consultation with professional associations and employers,
- be based entirely on the skills and competences relating to professional translation (so that no one gets a degree in translation without having reached the necessary standard in the professionally significant course components). The point here would be to make it impossible for any student with lousy performances in professional translation to make the grade by averaging out with so-called core modules or broader-based or even ‘fancy’ courses.

- cover all the skills and competences required to practise as a translator, and not simply ‘translation skills’ assessed on the basis of two or three hours a week of class work involving the translation of a few so-called ‘specialised’ articles.

6. Which students?

Translator training courses should be open to students who have graduated in all kinds of subject areas. Essential pre-requisites are then language skills for non language graduates and specific domain knowledge for language graduates. The problem can be approached in three different ways:

- either all applicants to translation courses are systematically screened beforehand to make sure they have the necessary language skills and competences required for the course,
- or all applicants are admitted (generally because the system forbids prior screening) and, in that case, the institution should take all means to make sure that all students do acquire the required skills before they start the translation courses,
- or those in charge decide not to run a translator training course at all, because it would take so much time, effort and expense to bring the students up to the required standard that academic bodies would consider this economically unrealistic anyway.

This is the crux of the matter in a number of countries and institutions. They spend far too many important resources (time, energy and money) on trying to improve students’ language skills before they can begin to train them as translators, simply because they are not allowed to set minimum entry standards for such courses.

In short, many translator-training institutions, while not finding the kind of applicants they would like to enrol, have to dissuade those who would like to enrol for all the wrong reasons (some of the wrong reasons possibly being ‘*translation is something I already do*’, or ‘*I love languages*’, or ‘*I have always wanted to be an interpreter*’, or even the unbeatable ‘*I love to travel*, etc.).

No wonder, therefore, that, in countries where selective entry for degree level courses is forbidden by law:

- the most determined course managers have designed undergraduate courses in such a way that they can be reasonably sure that all students will have reached the right level of language proficiency before they enter the final, crucial years at master’s level.

- the others have fallen back on one-year selective entry post-graduate courses, but still rarely fill all the places available whenever they apply the ‘normal’ criteria of language proficiency and ability to translate ‘honourably’, meaning: with no hair-raising blunder.

In the context of ‘Bologna’, with the introduction of two-year post-graduate courses, course managers are faced with the dilemma of trying to attract students at the start of year 4 while maintaining some kind of selective entry at the start of year 5. The problem is both to try not to be caught with anyone who made it into year 1 at master level and does not qualify for year 2 and to be left with the capacity to actually attract worthwhile students for entry at level 2. Things are, in that respect, very complicated. And, to complicate matters further, it also appears that the model that prevails in many countries (and multinational corporations or companies) has it that four years of university training is enough (MAs in translation being **the** reference) with many employers bluntly stating that M2 is a waste of time.

- existing courses in any country compete for the best applicants, especially if they cannot draw on a pool of students who have previously followed a two to three-year bachelor degree course in translation in their own university.

Those same institutions also have to meet the challenge of providing training and qualifications for the growing number of people who already translate as part of their job but have neither the qualifications nor the status (or financial rewards) that would normally give them recognition for these skills, and also for practising translators who need to keep up with new technological developments. Continuing education and training will be a growth area for institutions involved in translator training over the next few years, mostly due to the sudden acceleration of technological changes affecting the profession. And this also means going in for distance teaching and training.

The growing gap between the average ability of new students entering university and the increasingly sophisticated demands of the market place, means that translation courses will in fact span six years of higher education (if the ubiquitous ‘year abroad’ is included) and even, in some cases, seven years (if work placements and, more probably, time for specialisation are included).

This being said, an often repeated complaint on the part of employers, confirmed by several international surveys, is that there is a severe worldwide shortage of top level specialised translators, even though an astonishing number of young graduates cannot find work. The explanation is quite simple:

On the one hand, many of the existing courses are not designed to meet current professional requirements (often because those in charge of such courses have not bothered to identify these requirements). On the other hand, many budding translators have not had the prior training or do not have the aptitude to fol-

low courses which would produce the required professional profiles, especially in highly specialised technical fields or in complex processes such as localisation. The conjunction of badly designed or ‘soft’ courses and students lacking motivation quite naturally and inevitably produces unemployables.

7. Where and how?

Translators should primarily be educated and trained at university, but this should by no means be taken to imply that all universities should run courses in translation.

Geographical location is now no longer a major consideration. Translation markets are both national and international and modern technology has abolished distance as an obstacle to communication. No region or country should therefore be considered as particularly ‘suitable’, or, conversely, particularly unsuitable places to run translator training courses.

Translator-training wise, there are two types of countries:

- those where there is a real dearth of properly trained specialised professional translators (*i.e.* countries like China, Cambodia, Tunisia, the Ivory Coast, Portugal, South Africa, Brazil, Poland, Romania, Macedonia, Turkey, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Mozambique, to name but a few), and where there is therefore a vital need for new (or more) translator training courses in the national languages;
- those where the question is mainly of training those who will take over from the outgoing generation of translators and who will be able to meet the new market needs and challenges (*i.e.* with competences in areas such as localisation, IT tools, project management, customer portfolio management, etc).

In the first set of countries, new courses can easily be justified, both economically and academically. In the others, due consideration must be given to existing courses and the question is mainly how to avoid turning out too many translation graduates too fast, with the risk of swamping the market with poorly qualified translators. Unfortunately, the ‘language crisis’ which is now affecting many departments in a number of higher education systems throughout the world with adverse effects on graduate intake for a number of languages (therefore potentially threatening the number of faculty posts) has led some academic authorities to take up easy answers, oblivious as they are to the consequences of poorly thought out policies and badly designed courses. All too often, the call for more professionally-oriented courses is automatically taken to mean ‘*more translation studies courses*’ regardless of market conditions and requirements, actual job opportunities, skills profiles, and the rest.

In either case, given the complex and highly technical nature of such courses, the following words of warning should be heeded before deciding to set up any new translator training programme:

1. Ministerial or academic authorities, course directors and the faculty themselves all have to realize that such courses, given their specific aims and the learning outcomes involved, require (a) more time, (b) more resources of all kinds and (c) more flexible and complex teaching methods than traditional language and literature courses. In short, *bona fide* translator training courses do not come cheap. As a case in point, any HE institution aiming to train translators should be able to offer students a hardware and software environment similar in quality to that of any *bona fide* translation company with sufficient numbers of workstations for all. Given the modest levels of funding usually available through the institution itself, such courses will generally have to try and attract as much outside funding as possible.
2. It would be infinitely more rational, in terms of resources and efficiency, to put more resources into those academic centres that already have the required hardware, software, documentation and human resources rather than spread them thin over an ever-increasing number of institutions. It may of course seem reasonable – and even more virtuous – to offer students the courses they would like to attend not too far from their home ground but, unfortunately, there is no room left today for trial and error in the training of translators: everyone knows that new courses have only two or three years in which to make their mark. If they fail, their reputation will be lost forever and those who will suffer the consequences of ill-informed decisions are the students themselves. Forces should be concentrated at centres of excellence, leaving open the possibility for newcomers to create courses tuned to new job profiles as the situation in the translation industry evolves, which is how it has worked in the past. The only stupid (and frequent) decision is to indefinitely clone the same courses for reasons of geographical and academic convenience.

The worst possible reasons for setting up a translation courses are (1) desperation (to save teachers' jobs, generally in language departments threatened with closure because of the fall in student numbers, where a master's degree in translation studies is seen as 'the' solution) and (2) personal ambition (*i.e.* initiating a postgraduate course in translation purely to increase one's standing in the institution). The latter case may be found simply because some university authorities view professional translation, especially if combined with language engineering or other 'language industry' related components (which often are mere window dressing) as the kind of high-tech, forward-looking course that will attract students and good publicity – with computers all over the place and possibly no one being able to put them to any kind of intelligent use.

In many countries, philology as an academic subject is fast nearing extinction. Staff in philology departments will therefore clutch at any straw in order to survive. To make things worse, most academics assume that any language specialist can *ipso facto* turn into a teacher of translation overnight. No wonder language and literature departments trying to breathe new life into a subject which is in terminal decline may see the introduction of 'non literary' translation as a natural last resort. This is all the more tempting as the initiator may then take on the guise of the 'white knight' who has saved the department from almost certain oblivion. And no one cares less if the course components turn out to be completely out of touch with the real world of translation and therefore disastrous in terms of student employability.

The only rational approach would be to input additional resources into courses which have already proved successful, if need be through national and international co-operation with similar courses elsewhere, rather than develop a plethora of new courses in translation, especially when the latter turn out to be poor carbon copies of existing programmes, offering nothing in the least innovative or stimulating. Given that translators need to be trained in three languages (A, B and C) and that any translation course implies classes and investment in at least six to ten language combinations, this would seem to be the only rational solution. The rationale behind running specialised translation classes with 'groups' of three or four students seems rather tenuous, to say the least, when the students involved could actually be enrolled in another university with a similar course 100 miles away. But we all know why this kind of thing happens. The argument in favour of focusing resources on a few top level courses is strengthened by the fact that the cost of fitting out a room with all the equipment and software needed to teach localisation, subtitling and the use of various IT tools is well in excess of 100,000 euros.

It has been observed that the number of graduates in any country that actually pass the recruitment tests into post-graduate translator training courses is just under half the number of places available in such courses, which means there is plenty of room for improvement in translator training or plenty of waste in terms of resources, or both. The worst case scenario also includes those countries that have been allowing dozens of translation departments to spring up almost overnight, with the result that thousands of would be 'translators' have flooded the market within the space of a few years, with a ratio of graduates to potential jobs in translation of 20 to 1 or even, in some cases, 50 to 1 – with the automatic consequences that (i) those who do not find employment go freelance and (ii) freelancers desert the national market or starve – or both once again. Conversely, in some countries, philology departments carry on regardless, trying to paper over the rapidly developing cracks in their ageing walls.

All too often, translation courses have been set up and accepted by the authorities without the slightest economic or academic justification and without meeting any of the criteria required to establish truly successful professionally-oriented programmes. Academic staff are then at a loss when it comes to defining course contents and outcomes and call on local professionals to bail them out, which can be perfectly legitimate up to a point, but by no means guarantees quality. Sometimes, new courses are opened against the advice of all the professionals whose opinion was sought. In this case, the promoters of the course always bring out the results of some market survey showing unfulfilled translation needs. Hardly surprising: any work provider will readily confirm there is a need for (cheaper) translations. The real question would be ‘are there any unfulfilled needs for translation in normal market conditions?’, because work providers always have the not so secret hope that an increase in the number of translators will bring down prices.

In the very short term, even if the quality of training is shaky, the development of translator training programmes seems to be in everybody’s interest:

- academic institutions see an easy way of giving declining subject areas a ‘professional’ facelift;
- faculty members see ‘innovative’ courses as a way of hanging on to their jobs and/or recycling age-old material under a new guise;
- practising translators can in some cases earn relatively good money by offering their services and their experience as part-time tutors;
- employers and work providers find themselves with a greater choice of applicants for new jobs or contracts, and are therefore in a better position to resist demands for better wages or increased rates;
- local work providers think students on such courses will be more than happy to do their translations for them as work experience, (almost) for free;
- good professional translators find their own skills enhanced by the mediocre or disastrous performance of sometimes poorly trained graduates fresh out of the new courses;
- some of the less scrupulous translation brokers find a whole new generation of hapless victims just waiting to be ‘fleeced’, eager for work and knowing next to nothing about market conditions.

In the medium-term, the end-result will be exactly the reverse of what was originally intended, *i.e.* a rise in graduate unemployment, because the market will not be able to expand fast enough to absorb the glut of translators (which is why anyone thinking about applying for a particular translator-training course should first of all find out about graduates’ employment prospects and earnings levels) or, because the glut will destabilise the market and throw it wide open to the amateurs and outlaws. Those who have a clear vision of current trends in graduate employment know that this has already happened and that many so

called ‘translator training courses’ are leading students up a blind alley. And this is a reality in **all** countries because, whatever the languages, there actually is such a thing as an international market or, more accurately, an international offer of services. Situations are therefore always made worse by the fact that no one can have any real control over the number of translators coming up on the market. One may wonder what would happen if employment and income figures per training programme or school were made available for all translation graduates (and policymakers). Would the least efficient courses in terms of employment (including self-employment) be closed down?

Of course, it could be argued that not all the students who graduate from translator training institutes, schools and programmes necessarily become translators, and that their university education should be a passport to other careers. True. Then why keep labelling the courses as ‘translation studies’ courses: why not call them language engineering courses (special purpose language teaching, corporate language policy consultancy, language resource design and management, language auditing, information publishing and dissemination, multilingual documentation management) or courses in technical writing or any other professional competence, including language teaching? The choice is clearly between (1) diversifying the specialist skills and competences which can be added-on to the common-core job profiles of translators, or (2) opting for true multilingualism combined with professional profiles which we still need to define. Either way would be preferable to churning out thousands of ‘*translation*’ graduates, many of whom have neither the inclination nor the skills to become professional translators.

All this amounts to is that new translation courses should never be decided without careful thought and planning. All too often, courses are set up for the wrong reasons: because someone ‘believes’ there will be jobs in translation, or even worse, because there have been a couple of jobs advertised by the local employment bureau, because the teacher met one of her former students who is apparently ‘translating books’, because the institution wants to get on the bandwagon, because enrolment in ‘this or that language course’ is falling, or because someone wants to advance his or her academic career . . . and, inevitably, students who enrol for courses set up for those wrong reasons, sooner or later realise that they have been led up the garden path. But then, who cares?

8. Course validation

There is an ongoing debate in the profession over the quality of translator training, and consequently, over the way translation courses are recognised and qualifications are delivered.

The debate echoes the struggle undertaken by some who would like to protect the profession by requesting that anyone wanting to practise as a (full-time or part-time) professional translator should have to prove that they can meet certain minimum quality standards. It is also related to the long-lasting issue of translator accreditation or certification, which has long been accepted in some places (*e.g.* Quebec or Ontario) but seems to raise endless problems in other countries (France in particular). As a matter of fact, some would prefer to solve the problem by having course accreditation rather than translator accreditation.

The two possible answers to this question are in fact much more clearly contrasted than would appear at first sight. As a matter of fact, one can either consider that:

- if the course is ‘good’, then the students graduating from the course must be ‘good’, or
- if the graduates are ‘good’, then the course must ‘good’.

In the first instance, the quality of a course depends very much on the same factors as the outcome of any other ‘process’: the quality of the ‘raw materials’ (*i.e.* the students entering the course, who must then be selected on the basis of ability and potential), the quality of the ‘operatives’ (*i.e.* the professional qualities of academics involved in the course), the ability of the teaching staff to train students for the specific requirements of their future profession (by including a number of practising professionals as external tutors), the quality and relevance of the tools and methods used in replicating or simulating the professional environment, and the quality of the ‘end-product’ (as measured by the structure and components of the course but also by the learning outcomes acquired at the end of the course and, more obviously, by the employability of the trainees).

In the second instance, it is the employment market that ultimately validates or invalidates professionally oriented courses, according to two basic criteria:

- employment levels in the type of jobs and positions that course graduates should be aiming for, measured by:
 - the number of months it takes for students to find a relevant salaried position or to become established as a freelance translator making a decent living – given that it usually takes some time indeed to establish oneself as a freelancer,
 - the career prospects offered once students get their first job (a particularly important criterion in the world of translation, because, if the prospects are bright, it shows that the people in charge of the courses have been capable of endowing their trainees with the skills required to respond to changes in technological environments and market trends).
- earnings or income levels (for salaried translators and freelancers respectively).

The first option focuses on the learning process and learning environment, while the second focuses on the results of that process. The first option implies that there should be some kind of course validation body (there would be a number of contenders ready to play the part, in particular CIUTI with national or international associations of translators wanting to have their say, of course) while the second relies purely on the market. And those who argue that any course that meets the criteria required by the first option will necessarily meet those required by the second should think carefully about the following:

- Courses in the same country, in theory having the same entry criteria, the same percentage of practising professional tutors, the same equipment, the same course structures and the same trainer profiles, have widely differing graduate employment and earnings figures.
- If course validation criteria had been in place fifteen years ago, many of the courses that have risen up to the challenges of the translation (and localisation) industry, trained those who have taken part in the exponential growth of the translation markets and helped define (one would say ‘create’) many of the new job profiles which have appeared over that period would never have been ‘accredited’. Course accreditation can easily lead to the ‘cloning’ of existing courses simply because they are considered as ‘models’ to be copied. And the fairest bet would be that the proponents of the most antiquated models would want to have the power to decide on accreditation on the grounds that respectable old ladies always know best and positively dislike bad-mannered upstarts.

Quality ‘labels’ and accreditation procedures can be perfectly legitimate as long as they give access to otherwise restricted markets and are not used, hypocritically, simply to exclude any newcomers from ‘the club’. This would imply, for a start, that there is a professional status offering some kind of protection or at least identification through some kind of label. In fact, at the very end, the only really legitimate accreditation is one systematically awarded by employers and clients by way of employment and pay or rates. As already stated, it is no secret that there exists an unofficial rating of translator training institutions per language pairs and per job profiles. If in doubt, call any major translation agency or company.

When it comes to the crunch, the only effective way of vetting the quality and (long-term) relevance of translator training programmes is to set up **joint boards** and ask them to provide the training objectives and guidelines. Such joint boards would bring together representatives of the industry, representatives of the profession (including a number of former graduates), academics involved in the courses, and representatives of the funding authorities. Such joint boards are generally the most effective way of addressing the issue of adjusting courses to professional requirements by clearly spelling out the needs of the profession and

industry. As a counterpart, the presence of major market players amounts to some kind of professional ‘pre-accreditation’.¹⁷

9. Translator trainers

The question of who actually trains future translators is a crucial aspect of the whole debate. It is, in fact, threefold: (1) who is in charge of the course, (2) who is responsible for this or that component and (3) how are the trainers themselves trained for the job.

9.1 Tasks and responsibilities

The fundamental issue is that of how responsibilities and tasks are shared out between the academics and the professionals involved in the course.

Everyone should in theory be able to agree that training must be geared to **genuinely** professionally-oriented learning outcomes and learning processes since this is what will ultimately make the difference – unless work providers are just interested in the cost aspect of translation, in which case there is no point in bothering about professionalism. But the sharing of tasks and responsibility between academics on the one hand and practitioners on the other is still a moot point.

The academic institution should undoubtedly have full responsibility for curricular design, for all the groundwork, and for doing the actual training (including the professional components of such training) **before** sending graduates out there into professional environments, simply because professional practice is **not necessarily** innovative and efficient in **all** such environments. The university is the place where future translators should learn to apply optimal techniques and best practice, even though some of these may have to go by the board when the going gets tough in real-life professional situations and, to put it bluntly, professionals sometimes have a twisted view of things and many are of opinion that much of what academics know must go into translator training is just a waste of time and should be disregarded ... and that training should only take place ‘on the job’. Also, any professional tends to think he/she is the epitome of the industry or the profession

17. This has been the case since 1991 at Rennes 2 University (where professionals and the industry are consulted every six months at least) and where the course profile and contents have evolved every year since the onset of the course. The exercise involves all those former students who are willing to take part, as well as thirty or so translation companies, a dozen or so freelancers and eight international experts.

when in fact diversity prevails and training has to take such diversity into account to better arm graduates to face the varieties of job requirements.

The academic training institution should not, therefore, rely on the professionals to do **all** the groundwork. There is a real danger that academics, not wanting – or unable – to take responsibility for professionally-oriented course components, see their role purely as providing the methodological and theoretical elements (in the various forms and names of ‘translatology’, ‘translation theory’, ‘methodology’ and ‘translation techniques’) leaving it to the professionals to instil reality into the programme.

Academics should know what professional translation is about and professionals must get acquainted with the theories and methodologies and models. This is sometimes the case. If not, academics should at least do some kind of work placement in professional environments and professionals should be ‘taught’ whatever theory and teaching practices they should know. It is also the responsibility of universities to do research on professional practice, models, and protocols. But there is always the risk that:

- universities, not wanting to be accused of becoming too ‘vocational’, will shelter behind the cosy walls of ‘academia’;
- the ‘professionals’ will take over translator training altogether, on the grounds that ‘they know best’, leaving the university holding an empty shell (and awarding increasingly worthless qualifications).

The respective attributions of both academics and practitioners must be clearly defined. The university must take full responsibility for every aspect of the training of future translators, including such as are ‘subcontracted’ to professionals according to specifications set by the university itself (under the guidance of a competent joint board as described above). The profession and industry take responsibility for allowing graduates to **apply** what they have learned – on the university precincts as well as through work placements – and gain work experience in the field.

Training future translators fully for their future jobs means introducing the professional dimension in the actual course design and contents. The successive ways and steps through which this can be achieved are:

1. detailed information on existing jobs and careers,
2. basic training, taking the utmost care to integrate professional objectives at all junctures,
3. simulation of different kinds of work situations – by applying the same techniques and procedures as in a professional context, except that the deadlines, productivity criteria and resource constraints are not enforced quite as strictly.

4. emulation of professional practise – by carrying out translation service provision tasks under exactly the same conditions as in a standard professional context.
5. immersion in real-life working environments – particularly through work placements.

The above university training should involve professionals and the use of their exclusive resources (corporate translation memories and proprietary translation software tools) and work placements should be provided so that future translators can be confronted with real-life professional environments.

Ideally, such work placements should be adapted to each stage in the course and allow students to discover different fields and specialisms (localisation, multimedia production, technical or specialised translation, terminology, technical writing, etc.) and different working environments, so that all of them can get a comprehensive and realistic picture of the industry. Where internships are not common practise, training institutions should offer help in organising effective work placements for their students.

A logical progression of internships over three years would be: (1) a relatively short 'passive' period spent simply learning what it is like to work in a professional context, (2) a period of three months learning basic professional skills, and (3) a five- to eight-month placement – if possible in various environments – where all the skills and competences acquired over the full period of training can be implemented. Ideally, work placements should enable students to experience what translating entails in an in-house service, on the one hand, and in a translation company or an agency, on the other hand. If this is not possible as a hands-on experience, there should at least be an opportunity to observe work organisation and practises in both environments.

There are four types of internships or work placements: the 'ideal' experience, the standard work placement, the sub-standard work placement and the pseudo work placement (neither of the last two types being at all desirable).

- The ideal work placement is beneficial to the trainee in every respect, both from the point of view of interpersonal relationships and professional experience. The ideal context for this kind of placement is either a major translation service, a well organised translation company, or a small network of freelancers, but individual freelance translators may also be able to provide the necessary environment. During this kind of work placement, the future translator is closely supervised and constantly given useful tips and advice, and all translations are revised and assessed by a placement tutor in the company. In other words, the student receives proper, comprehensive, practical training.

- In the standard kind of work placement, the budding translator receives help and advice, and translations are proofread and checked but not extensively commented on. Fully revising and analysing the student's translations would mean being distracted from urgent work and therefore, losing money. All the same, guidance is available whenever needed and requested.
- In a sub-standard placement, the 'intern' is given actual translations to do without adequate supervision and without them being carefully proof-read or revised and therefore without any useful feedback.
- Pseudo work placements can mean two different types of experience:

In the first instance, the student intern is asked to do humdrum repetitive tasks which have no direct relevance to professional experience in the translation industry (*e.g.* making photocopies, duplicating CDs, making tea or coffee, carrying out a telephone survey, typing or posting mail, sending faxes, copying screens and all sorts of boring tasks).

One the contrary, in the second instance, the trainee is asked to do things which are well beyond any intern's capabilities, such as revising, dispatching, or allotting translations. Far too many agencies or brokers see interns as a permanent source of free labour, with the equivalent of at least one 'virtual' translator position being filled by successive waves of 'interns' who are often egged on by the (obviously unfulfilled) promise of a job at the end of their internship.

In both instances, the intern is – dare we say it – being exploited, and this kind of practice is by no means confined to 'outlaw' outfits: it is also found among established and respectable companies. Translators, who are always quick to ask for 'an end to irregular practice' would do well to start with drawing up an 'intern's charter'. If widely adopted, this kind of charter would provide the less fortunate interns with some kind of recourse in case things do not turn out as expected.

To be fair, it must be said that no more than 2 to 3% of all work placements actually go wrong, but those that do can have a devastating effect on the students involved. And one should also remember that the **incompetent, badly behaved, loud-mouthed and vindictive intern** is also an unfortunate fact of life

General organisation

The following chronology shows how responsibilities can be shared out optimally between academic institutions and the translation industry:

Academic institutions	Industry/the profession
Define the basic course	Provide information on training profiles
Define the professionally oriented course components	Define professional aims and objectives
Provide the basic training (with the help of external tutors from the profession)	Provide information on the various job profiles and careers
	Provide opportunities for 'passive' work placements
Simulate 'real-life' professional situations (with the help of external tutors)	
Emulate professional practice (with the help of external tutors)	Offer 'active' work placements
	Offer employment and opportunities for self-employment

9.2 Trainer profiles

In any course, there must first of all be someone, or a closely-knit group (team) of people, who know exactly where they are heading, what objectives they want to reach, and how they think they can achieve them. This person or these persons must be those who define the contents and learning outcomes for **each** course component and check the overall consistency and coherence of the curriculum.

What is needed is a harmonious combination of trainers who are primarily translators and trainers who are primarily academics. This has a number of far-reaching implications.

First of all, if it is commonly accepted that translation jobs now involve a **multiplicity of tasks** including file processing and management, scanning, various kinds of quality controls, analysis, comprehension, documentation, terminography, phraseography, proof-reading, revision, disassembly/reassembly, conversions into and out of a variety of formats, layout, dissemination on a number of different media, then it follows that training must be carried out:

- by a ‘conductor’, who has a perfect overview and mastery of all the relevant operations, tasks, procedures and tools required for optimum translation service provision;
- or
- by a closely coordinated team working to a carefully thought out schedule based on finely staggered learning phases, because a critical path analysis of translation service provision and of translator training confirms that each and

every skill and piece of knowledge must be made available at a very precise and definite moment along the training flow.

Secondly, tutors brought in from the translation industry generally have to be trained in classroom techniques and group dynamics, in grading and assessment procedures, and need to learn about the specific conditions and constraints found in higher education institutions. It is up to the academic staff in the team to provide any such training and information which may be required.

Conversely, academics generally need to learn about current professional practice in the translation industry, about the professional translator's strategies and techniques, and about the various tools available on the translator's work station. This can be done through reading reports and articles (the debate over vocational training has been going on for years), through attending symposia and conferences devoted to these issues, by doing a proper work placement in a translation company or by academics themselves practising part-time professional translation for at least a year, providing this is not forbidden by applicable rules and regulations.

It is **absolutely preposterous** that academics can set-up training programmes and pretend to train future translators without any first-hand personal experience of the profession – under the same working conditions as will prevail for their students – and without the slightest knowledge of market trends.

While translation professionals quite rightly rail against the fact that anyone can set up shop as a translator, translator trainers (who should not be equated with teachers of translation) find it equally galling that any academic can turn into a teacher of 'specialised translation' overnight on the grounds that she/he has (1) '*done a PhD in modern languages*' or (2) '*has translated short stories*' or (3) '*is already taking classes in translation*' – which usually means the students translate newsmagazine articles or selected pages in classic fiction. Worse still are the cases where teachers are foisted upon a translator training course by the head of department because (1) it is the only way they can get their full contingent of statutory hours, and/or (2) '*anyone who has taught modern languages can train translators*'.

What is most urgently needed is staff whose teaching and practice is based both on their ability to reflect on their subject and on their own professional competence in the field.

The only way to achieve the right mix of theory and practice is through the integration of all the course components into a model of translation service provision. This requires the trainers themselves to undergo a **cultural revolution**. Translator training is no longer simply about teaching students to 'purely' translate (simply because it is unlikely that future translators will be able to earn a decent

living through their translation skills alone). Therefore, the trainers themselves have to be able to:

- consider translation in all the different environments in which it is now found, taking into account the impact of the environment on the translation process itself and on the perception people have of translation;
- acquire all the necessary skills and competences, if they do not already have them.

This means that existing translator trainers have to become proficient in a whole new range of skills and/or that new positions must be filled by people who have all the necessary academic accomplishments as well as a perfect knowledge of the conditions, processes, constraints and tools prevalent in the translation industry. Each trainer must therefore be perfectly at home on both sides of the fence.

Failing that, the fence will remain a barrier between the ‘academic world’ and the ‘profession and industry’ and actual translator training will inevitably take place outside the universities. Having been introduced in the universities, tutors from the translation profession and industry are easily led to believe that they can teach their own professional skills and competences. The number of special crash courses aimed at translators by professionals is already quite significant in that respect and is growing fast – a good example being that of *magistrad.com*. And any **professional** deciding to create a **professional** course (preferably as distance teaching) will not have any major enrolment problem.

So, if academic translator trainers are not capable of meeting the challenge, translator training as such is very soon likely to be outsourced to private companies. Things are already under way and might shortly lead to an ironical situation where universities will continue to teach translation theory with a bit of practice and deliver the degrees, while companies will deliver the actual professional **marketable** qualifications. The secret dream of some companies is in fact that any budding translator would be required to do a 12-month (unpaid) probationary work placement in a duly recognised ‘training’ company. Who will actually designate the company as a ‘training’ company is left to anyone’s imagination. Along the same line of reasoning, universities would keep up their age-old business of having people write PhDs about the theoreticalities of translation and getting academic positions to teach such theoreticalities happily away.

9.3 Emerging economies: A special case

The points made above do not of course apply to countries with emerging economies, where there is a dearth of qualified translator trainers, where there is no effective professional organisation and where the translation markets are (or seem to be) almost exclusively in the hands of language teachers. The introduction

of real translator training courses in these countries will help a real translation market to take shape. But for that to happen, existing translators and tutors must be convinced that the emergence of real translation professionals always encourages demand by bringing translation into the economic mainstream and increases everyone's markets tenfold. This being so, the transition from a poorly organised and fragmented market to one where professional translation is well recognised and supply and demand are well structured always takes its toll on the first generation(s) of translators. The question is how to prepare students to become translators while at the same time surviving if translation markets do not materialise fast enough. The answer probably lies initially in widely defined courses offering graduates a chance to practise in other fields until they can earn a living as full-time translators. The difficulty this creates is being able to manage student flows in relation to demand, while trying to ensure that the market expands. The transition period is also useful in allowing translator trainers to gain experience and to devise original learning models which are adapted to local market conditions and in allowing all those in economic circles to realise that translation can enhance business opportunities and generate added value for the work provider.

10. Too far down the vocational road?

There is no doubt whatsoever that a university education means far more than simply acquiring 'immediate' skills and know-how. And it is equally true that "translators must be taught how to translate" even though that, for sure, is by no means sufficient today. But translator training must also be definitely vocational and there should be no fear of going too far that way.

First of all, 'professionally-oriented' higher education is not simply about teaching students to become keyboard 'operatives', thereby precluding any kind of critical appraisal or creative thinking. The point is that 'academic' courses aimed at 'broadening the mind' and 'professionally-oriented' courses that open up new job opportunities for the graduates involved are not mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary, in fact: professionally-oriented courses must be supported by theoretical analyses of the processes involved (models as the outcome of research programmes) and the models should be grounded in a clear perception and understanding of professional realities and constraints.

Theory and research must underlie every aspect of the translator-training course, but in such a way that they help to enhance its professional relevance. A truly professionally-oriented approach to higher education implies nothing less than a perfect knowledge of the aims, the processes, the environments, the strategies, the critical paths and the operations which make up the professional

practice for which students are being trained. This requires extensive research on the part of the faculty members involved so as to provide the solid theoretical grounding on which the course will be based. It is becoming quite clear that this kind of professionally oriented research has already started feeding new translation theories.

And in case anyone is really worried about ‘theory’ disappearing from translator training courses, let them rest assured: theory, in the academic meaning of the word, will always win through in academia, especially if it is totally divorced from real-life translation practice. The question is: should translation theory be taught as a separate course or should it just be the foundation on which the whole training scheme is built? One possible answer is that any actual translation theory course should come rather late into the picture, once proper training is in the last phases of completion and the people who are exposed to the theory can relate what they are being taught to a vast corpus of ‘personal’ case studies and to their experience of professional realities.

Furthermore, when theory comes in the guise of pseudo-methodological ‘tricks’ such as those of comparative stylistics, this fosters two delusions: (1) such tricks have nothing to do with translation theory and cannot be substituted for it and (2) they provide no actual help when translating. Nothing, in fact, can be more pathetic than a budding translation graduate explaining in an assured way, with the support of such considerations, how he or she came up with a ‘solution’ that just happens to be perfectly nonsensical.

11. In-house training only?

Initial translator training always needs to be completed by in-house training. This is why rather long and frequent work placements are so important and why company training is developing apace. And some companies are tempted to step in and take over the training of translators altogether so that:

- translators fit into their own mould,
- knowledge of the products and processes concerned may be included in the training process,
- training can be stripped of anything which such companies tend to think of as unnecessarily ‘academic’ – meaning: having to immediate ROI.
- both the objectives and the learning outcomes can be more clearly (*i.e.* narrowly) defined.

This is sometimes inescapable and several major accounts (companies needing huge volumes of translations and large-scale translation agencies) now systematically provide special training for their in-house translators and sub-contractors.

This is usually because translation procedures are customized, job specifications are ever more complex and comprehensive, and style guides are growing indefinitely. In short, having defined extremely detailed specifications for the work required, the companies concerned gradually move on to train their “own translators”. Some of these companies will not long resist the temptation to set up their own translation or, more likely, localisation ‘academies’ or ‘institutes’. The very fact that many universities rely on the translation industry to give their ‘translation’ graduates the professional training they themselves are unwilling or unable to provide should very quickly confirm everyone concerned that there is indeed a training ‘market’ out there just waiting to be developed. Various kinds of Institutes are already functioning, especially in localisation. Many more are in the offing. It sounds as if the translation industry were of opinion that translator (localiser) training is too serious to be left in the hands of universities.

12. Heaven help us!

Experience shows that one should always expect the worst. So, let’s be prepared.

It is more than likely, within the context of the ‘Bologna’ process, that universities will soon be offering “professional translation” diplomas at undergraduate level. Given that five-year courses are barely sufficient to train acceptable translators, one can fear that:

- either the holders of such degrees will end up at the local job shop because they are insufficiently trained,
- or they will swamp the market at the expense of better qualified but more ‘expensive’ translators,

and maybe everyone will just dumb down to the lowest standard.

Similarly, the new master’s degrees could signal the beginning of the end for truly professionally-oriented courses. In many universities, understandably keen on ‘spending wisely’, the change provides a good opportunity to cut costs by introducing core modules to be shared by several courses, in which case the advances made these last ten or fifteen years or so towards more professionally-oriented translation courses, go into reverse. Given the professional profile requirements for future multimedia, multilingual communication engineers, any movement back towards more general course contents will devalue the Master’s degrees even before they have time to make an impact on the employment market.

So, in all probability, the people in charge of existing courses will have to fight a hard battle trying to convince the industry that the changes in the educational setup have been put to advantage to reinforce the more professional aspects. If that does not work, those who have the (physical, economic, and moral) resources

will setup 'post-Master' courses of one to two years, enrolling holders of the new (European) Master's degree so as to give them the required top-of-the-range qualifications.

Practical information:

The Consortium for the training of translator trainers [CFFT] trains professional translators to become teachers and teachers to become translation professionals.

Please contact: http://www.colloque.net/en/innovation_en.html

What the (near) future (most probably) holds...

Predicting the way professional translation markets and practice are likely to evolve in the not too distant future is quite simple: all the portents are already clearly there.

First of all, the massive ‘continent’ of industrial translation (*i.e.* the major multimedia, multilingual and multioperator markets) and the fragmented archipelago of smaller scale translation markets will continue to drift apart as big will get ever bigger. The trend will be towards continuing economic and technical concentration of companies offering enhanced Web-based services and putting the linguistic ‘by-products’ of translation (terminology, phraseology, knowledge bases, etc.) to use and to market in industrial applications based on voice recognition and voice synthesis.

Isolated freelancers are likely to be confined to the role of sub-contractors for these industrial ‘giants’ and their smaller-sized cousins, simply because the investments needed to remain truly and fully independent will be way beyond the reach of the average freelancer. Between these ‘giants’ on the one hand and ‘midgets’ on the other, there will thrive a dwindling body of firmly established freelance operators and freelancing teams operating in a number of relatively secure niche markets and/or geographical ‘territories’ and providing a combination of the required capacity, flexibility, enhanced quality, and geographical proximity.

The scene will be dominated by organisations and systems (*i.e.* translation companies, agencies, brokers, Web sites and portals) that will primarily be geared towards concentrating demand and despatching the translations to have them done at the lowest possible cost. Even the translation companies, who will keep dealing with part of the work in-house, will find it hard to resist the temptation of sub-contracting. All organisations will choose to sub-contract the ‘pure’ translation work to freelance translators while taking care of the most lucrative parts of the service (disassembly, layout, formatting, reassembly, engraving, printing, infographics, Web site design, integration, etc.). The text element of the translation will be subjected to ‘top-down’ revision by proof-readers who will simply check the linguistic aspect of things. The (freelance) translator at the end of the chain will have to assume full responsibility for the quality of the translation in return

for the guarantee of a steady supply of translations – he may also even have to hire a reviser if standards make this mandatory. But the real added value will be extracted prior to the translation stage proper (disassembly, format conversion, terminology management, etc.) and re-integrated after completion of that same translation stage (through reassembly, back conversions, infographics, layout, integration into software, video, Web sites, video games, film, engraving, testing, etc.). Alternatively, the best translators will inevitably turn to revision as they will have the required skills and may hope to make more money from revision than they would from translating.

In the very short term, translation businesses will be offering a comprehensive service and operating with two distinct profit centres: one with a reduced profit margin (*i.e.* translation) and the other with the widest possible profit margin (*i.e.* any task or process other than the translation proper taking place prior to, during, or after the translation). It is to be expected that Web agencies or 'localisation agencies' will get the upper hand and just include translation (localisation) as part of their offer, in the same way as post-production companies tend to include subtitling, dubbing, and the like into their offer or video game design companies also make room for 'linguistic' localisation. Alternatively – and most probably – translation companies and agencies that have not already done so will include webmastering and any multimedia processing and development in their offer of services, thus extending the scope of translation-cum-localisation service provision.

In the medium term, 'tentacular' companies with a widespread network of branches will be organised around a central hub which will employ translators (or more probably 'localisers') from across the whole range of mainstream cultural backgrounds, offering all the main language combinations and a wide range of skills. This central hub will deal directly with large volume contracts in all the main languages. It will be organised on the basis of task and skill diversification and will have access *via* the intranet (or *via* the 'extranet' for external partners) to a bank of in-house translation resources, enabling the company to process its massive workload efficiently and quickly, and giving it a competitive edge over its main rivals. This hub will be linked up with widely disseminated satellite units which will both cater for the clients who want to keep in close contact with their suppliers and enable the company to cast its commercial net as widely as possible and, as already stated, to relocalize each job in the country of the relevant target language and culture.

For similar reasons, agencies will also gradually move towards a new kind of organisation, with a growing number of salaried staff working alongside the commercial and accounting staff. These staff members are (1) file/job managers or project managers responsible for managing the sub-contractors and supervising the projects, (2) proof-readers (*i.e.* less experienced or less qualified staff and stu-

dent interns), (3) specialist operators responsible for various other technical tasks, prior to or following the translation stage, and (4) high value-added IT experts to carry out any 'not yet automated' operation upstream of, or downstream from the actual translating, which will itself be more and more heavily automated. A new type of service company will thus emerge, which will outsource the whole translation process (because translators will be two-a-penny and it is a lot cheaper to have them as freelance sub-contractors than salaried employees) and keep the tasks that are either too uneconomical to outsource (such as proof-reading) or that provide the highest added-value and therefore the highest profit margin (code handling and conversion, document assembly, disassembly, compiling, conversion, multi-media adaptation, technical certification, all kinds of media integration, etc. and, naturally enough, anything to do with management).

As a counterpoint to these two types of organisations, there will be an increasing number of freelance translators, some of whom will be in the same mould as those operating today, but with many more experts from a variety of fields ready to offer their services to work providers, translation companies, agencies or brokers. As translation is one of the few remaining activities which can be combined with a main job and as clients are, at least in theory, now more easily found on the Internet, many more will be tempted to 'have a go' on a freelance basis or by setting up private limited companies – which are easier to organise and less risky on a personal level.

Then will come the golden age of brokerage companies, agencies, translation bureaus and other middlemen, who will be ever less involved in the actual translation process as the number of potential sub-contractors increases. As the technology needed to practice the profession becomes even more advanced and expensive, many who do not have access to their own equipment and software will be all too happy to work for those who require the translator to be equipped with no more than a word processor. This will mean increased profit margins for the companies specialising in the high tech operations on the material and media and even lower tariffs for those who simply 'translate' the text part. At the same time, some work providers will opt for the opposite approach, outsourcing the whole process **and** providing the translator with the equipment, the software and the resources required for the job, as is already the case in many other industrial areas.

In all probability, the translation industry in the twenty-first century will go oral. Voice recognition and dictation software is probably going to radically change the way translation is perceived and practised, in the same way as word processing software and translation memory systems have done over the past twenty years. Dictated translation will become the norm once again, as in the days before word processing, when typists used to type out what translators dictated or recorded. The same gains can be expected from this development as when word processing turned translators into their own typists, thus eliminating

the cost of typing altogether. Of course translation, just like any other type of communication or human activity, will get increasingly mechanical, computerised and automated. This will result in three different translation markets, *i.e.* (1) low-cost-low-quality machine translation, (2) very high-quality high-cost human translation for critically important material, and (3) a 'middle-of-the-road' market where the best will be found along with the worst. Whatever the outcome, the move towards machine translation will carry on apace. For one simple reason: automation reduces costs; so, sooner or later, what can be automated will be and this inevitable development will determine the future of technical and specialised translation.

In fact, technical translation and specialised translation are likely to evolve in completely opposite directions. There will first be increased industrialisation of the translation process under the joint influence of increasing demand and globalisation. There will thus be increased mechanisation (in both meanings of the word), more automation (way beyond what present 'aids' do), the development of voice technology, increases in *bona fide* or 'pseudo' salaried employment, and further rationalisation of quality controls, materials, tools and procedures. The industrial model of machine translation (*i.e.* division of tasks, pre-translation, post-editing) will inevitably come to be applied to most human translation, even to the extreme where the 'text bits' are pushed on to the translator's workstation *via* the extranet, completely cut off from any kind of context, translated, and integrated directly into whatever media applies.

Everyone will have to accept that technical and specialised language will become more and more rational and 'controlled' in order to make it more effective and machine-compatible. Translators know full well that quite a lot of what they get to translate is of little interest and is either slipshod prose or gobbledegook written by people for whom writing is a chore. And they must be prepared to accept the fact that, whether or not it is combined with human intervention, machine translation can sometimes be a cost-effective answer to a real communication problem (in the same way as gisting, or other forms of rough, selective, indexing, synoptic, or partial translation).

Academics in particular will also have to accept the fact that translators are in the business of earning a living by providing a service. They will have to accept the fact that the specialised translator has a duty towards the work provider, the recipient of the translation, and the reader or end-user. From the work provider's point of view, he has a duty to be efficient and cost-effective. From the recipient's and the end-user's point of view, he must produce material that is unambiguous, clear, comprehensible, concise and accurate and make sure that the end product he delivers (the translated material) is safe, secure, and ergonomic. That is the be all and end all of translation.

Accepting these principles does not necessarily imply giving in to the ‘*philistines*’ and reducing things to the ‘sheer efficiency’ principle. Quite the opposite. It means getting rid of a whole raft of constraints. The principles listed above can in fact also be seen as the premises of a radically different evolution, highlighting the translator’s writing (creative) skills. As a matter of fact, given the right circumstances (*i.e.* when the financial stakes are high enough) the translator should be first and foremost a **highly skilled writer or designer** who uses the material to be translated as a source of information to be reorganised and reformulated to provide the most effective response possible, with different and often complex levels of communication. This means translation sometimes calls for complicated and tricky content management skills together with rather elaborate writing (editorial) skills, even when the source material is very technical and stereotyped and, some might say, especially in such cases.

In this perspective, which is poles apart from the trend towards more standardised, monotonous styles of communication, the translator will be responsible for any necessary cultural adaptations (deleting any items or references which may become meaningless in the target culture and adding or modifying any items which may be needed to inform or enlighten the reader or end-user or simply to make it possible for him to ‘understand’ the message), any typological adaptations (by using the organisational and phraseological models that the target group expects to find in a particular document and context), and any necessary changes in discourse and connotation. In doing this, the translator will be on ‘home ground’, where machine translation cannot compete. He will communicate more efficiently and therefore increase the added value of the translation both for the work provider (whom he will serve better) and for the end-user (whom he will serve more efficiently).

And whatever happens, the one who pulls through will be the one who knows from the inside the languages and the cultures involved, who is familiar with the domain or field of experience to which the source materials refer, who is familiar with all the translation techniques and strategies and knows what the basic challenges facing the translation industry are, who is familiar with all the tools needed to manage various kinds of materials (communication media and channels are now changing so rapidly that handling the material itself will soon be a specific competence, as is already the case with some knowledge engineering applications) and who can deliver the quality and productivity gains that everyone is dreaming of: *i.e.* the translator-cum-writer-cum-quasi IT expert-cum-innovative genius (with terminology, phraseology and project management skills thrown in). In other words, the **multilingual, multimedia communication engineering expert**.

At the same time, the shifts in professional translation practices, which are both geared towards, and prompted by, the trend towards greater industrialisation

of the translation process, have deeply changed the way translation is perceived and understood. The status of both the translation itself and of the process of translating has changed as have the words used to describe them.

Today, a translation is definitely seen as a product (even when it is a literary work or art form). The product is the result of a manufacturing process which includes the use of basic resources (*i.e.* terminology, phraseology, knowledge, information, etc.), of recycled components (*i.e.* translation memories and previously translated segments) as **raw material** or input, and where specially trained operators use a range of specific tools and equipment or devices to achieve optimal efficiency, measured according to increasingly sophisticated and standardised benchmarks and metrics, applying flow management principles. At the same time, we are witnessing the emergence of production process sheets (according to the materials concerned) and product lines (according to the nature of the client's needs, the work provider's specifications, and end-user ergonomics). Finally, the marketing and provision of what are now 'translation service packages' rather than 'mere' translations take into consideration market conditions, time to market, cost/quality and quality/cost ratios, added-value or value-loss, return on investment, quality assurance, quality control, sampling techniques, product adjustment and re-working, after-sales servicing, updating, and so on, just like any other kind of production process. The fact that translation is fundamentally an intellectual activity is only true for part of the process and does not make any difference as regards the mechanisms at work here.

This being so, customization is also the rule: the industrial-like **processes** and **procedures** are there because of the huge volumes, the quality requirements, and the productivity gains. But, at the same time, each translation is customized (tailored) to suit the specific requirements of each and every client. This is probably the biggest revolution: every translation is a special case and customer satisfaction is paramount, both in terms of quality of the end **product** and in terms of quality of the **service** provided. Hence the importance of the human relations and trust aspect of the transaction between the work provider and the service provider.

As the image of translation (the product) has changed, so has that of the translator (the manufacturer). He is now seen more and more as a highly qualified technical professional with two, three or four special skills areas, operating in a particular field and in one or more specialised technical areas within that field. This creates new opportunities for added value but conversely, imposes new and particularly stringent constraints. All the more so as he is expected to abide by the procedures, to ensure quality of the customized end-product, and to provide zero-defect performance and service.

On a deeper plane still, translation models themselves are now changing. Those inspired by literary translation no longer hold sway and have long ceased to be considered universal. New translation process models are becoming the standards, with literary translation and translation for publishing being seen and considered as just any other specific case in point.

Postface

There's still hope yet...

Let us now peer into the crystal ball, and try to make out the translator of the (not so) distant future.

There he is, in a kind of glass bubble. He is lying comfortably on a reclining chair, wearing odd-shaped sunglasses. He is taking sips out of what looks like a cocktail glass and seems to be addressing someone invisible.

If we look closer, the reclining chair appears much like a work-out machine and the sunglasses are in fact the latest type of oracular communication device that lets him hear the stuff he has to translate while visualising a fully automatic transcript at the same time. Eyelid-control starts or stops the recording and the transcript and adjusts their speed.

As the sound track plays and the transcript flashes, a 24GA (*24th generation analyser*) offers a semantic analysis for each section of the source material, works out the assumptions and implied meanings, and clears ambiguities. A special AI wizard calculates the core concepts and properties of the document, automatically retrieves any relevant information and 'matches' and integrates such matches directly into the translation. The term and phrase matches are taken from UTPB, the *Universal Term and Phrase Bank*, originally based on the merger of the Termium, GDT, and Eurodicautom term bases, and all existing term banks, which was decided unanimously at the famous World Terminology Summit in Brussels, in June 2008 (or was it 2020...?) Wider matches come from the KGB (*Knowledge-engineering Global Bank*). The whole system is connected to the *World Translation Memory*, or the memory of memories as some call it, based on an official (mandatory) registry of any translation carried out anywhere in the world from time immemorial. When there is no suggestion from the memory, the Automatic Software System for Instant Subliminal Translation And Neuronal Transposition – known as the Assistant –, steps in and offers suggestions.

And the translator translates. That is, he accepts or refuses the system's suggestions. All he has to do is move his forefinger, as recommended by the Health and Safety at Work Authority, much to the dismay of a team of Nobel prizeworthy researchers, who had devised a system that would have unfailingly done the job by monitoring the translator's reactions to the proposed translation *via* variations

in his respiratory rhythm and pupil diameter. But TC37000A of GlobNorm would have none of that.

Ah! And as sometimes happens, when there is no suggestion, the translator happily dictates his translation, which is then automatically synchronised with the source sound track and the visual display. He can at any time simultaneously listen to his translation and to the source segments. This is controlled automatically by his retina (TC37000B has not yet convened on that particular issue). Whenever the display is interrupted beyond a pause time that is automatically computed by the system and updated with reference to time-to-market deadlines, the digital sound track stops and an alarm goes off.

What the translator does not know, of course, is that there is no real deadline. There is no 'client' at all, either. And no one is going to read or listen to his translation ever... What he is actually doing is taking part in a test designed by the pluridisciplinary research team to pit their latest pet algorithms (written for the *WTE, or World Translation Engine*) against a good old human translator. So they placed a small ad on GNN (the Global News Network) asking for a translator. And up came the Last of the Mohicans, an elderly translator, who, by a pure fluke, was also the very first, ages ago, to be awarded ISO455002 – release AB4K – certification. And here is the man, blissfully unaware that the WTE has done it all in a few hundred-millionths of a second and that any interruptions in the suggestions were there simply for the amusement of the scientists, who are delighted, of course, as their mega translation engine is ticking away like clockwork (not that they would know what 'clockwork' means...). It is doing far better than the certified human translator: not only does it invariably make the right choices, but it is incredibly faster. In fact, the WTE can translate anything, anytime, according to the client's choice of languages and specifications, either immediately, or with an adjustable time lag. All you need to do is don the helmet and mentally upload your requirements... "*You've got it before you even thought you might want it*" the jubilant scientists say.

The unwitting guinea pig is also blissfully ignorant of the fact that the system can offer a dozen or so different instant translations to choose from, for each source document, into each known language or code. He just thinks he is doing quite well... and enjoying the cocktail.

But that trick of offering twelve parallel translations in each language is just a little extra challenge the team of scientists have set themselves. To put some fun into an otherwise boring experiment.

Who cares about getting translations done anyway? And about having a choice of languages into the bargain? Except, maybe, a handful of originals who haven't surrendered to either SMOG (*Standard MODern Globlish*) or IBM (*International Business Mandarin*), and insist on speaking the ancient dialects (sorry, languages!).

Just like that funny-looking, funny-sounding professor the other day on the *WVU* (*World Virtual University*) channel, talking about the translation of some antiquity: novels? poems? lieds? Ah! lieder? Yes, lieder. Or maybe not. Well, anyway, something from ages ago. Centuries B.G.¹⁸

18. Before Gates.

Glossary

Active language The language into which the translator is deemed to be able to translate professionally, *i.e.* the native language or the main language when the latter has mother tongue status.

Agent/Agency A person or company acting on behalf of a buyer of translations (*i.e.* a work provider) in order to get the work done on the best possible terms.
A person or company acting on behalf of a seller of translations (*i.e.* a translator) by finding the contracts the translator needs.

Assembly (and reassembly) The assembling of components, or sections, or parts.

Assumptions Everything that is necessarily true if what is being considered or stated is true.

Automatic dictionary A dictionary accessible *via* an electronic medium, offering infinitely easier and faster access than traditional paper dictionaries.

Autonomous translator A translator whose work does not require any revision.

Batch A section of material for translation designed to undergo some specific operation or process.

Batch allocation The allocation to different translators of lots or batches into which a translation has been split.

Batch translation Translation by lots or batches.

Bologna process The implementation of the Bologna Declaration (1999) that specified in particular that higher education institutions should set in place quality assurance and quality control procedures so as to allow comparisons between qualification levels in EU member states on the basis of common assessment criteria.

Bottleneck A particular stage in the translation process that reduces output capacity and slows down production.

Broker An agent who brings one party to a transaction in contact with another party to the same transaction.

Brokerage firm A company that acts purely as a middleman between the client and the translation provider, without being involved in any way in the actual translation process proper.

Brokerage/Brokering The purchase and sale of translations with no part of the translating done by the broker.

Button An object on screen, often shown in 3-D, on which the user is invited to click to trigger an action.

CAT (Computer-assisted translation) Translation carried out by a human translator with the help of translation software.

Checking/Check Checking the absolute compliance of a translation with all the specifications and the material constraints applicable. More precisely: checking the material integrity and accuracy of a translation, *i.e.* that everything that needed translating has been translated with due care; that the format complies with the required style sheet or graphic charter; that grammar and spelling are correct; that the terminology is homogeneous and complies with specifications.

Concept In the thought process, a mental representation of a person or thing, quality, action, location, situation, or relation, etc. which is usually designated by a term.

Conference interpretation/interpreting Simultaneous or consecutive interpreting carried out in the formal context of a meeting or conference.

Consecutive interpretation/interpreting Interpreting where the interpreter translates coherent segments of discourse when the speaker pauses.

Consecutive translations Several translations carried out in succession, with no overlap.

Contract manager (= file manager/job manager) The person responsible for managing a translation on behalf of the work provider and from the work provider's perspective.

Controlled languages Languages where the lexical and syntactical rules are such that ambiguity or fuzziness are greatly reduced or completely eliminated.

Corporate work provider A work provider with a large annual translation budget.

Database A large scale, structured and sometimes comprehensive set of interconnected data and software files, relating to a given subject and designed for a specific purpose, as, for instance, to help create, manage and access electronic dictionaries.

Deliverable translation A translation meeting such quality requirements as normally render revision superfluous.

Designation Any linguistic form used to designate a concept.

Desktop publishing/DTP A term usually used to describe the creation of printed documents using a desktop computer.

Detection (= Cueing) A shot by shot description of a film or video soundtrack (dialogue, music, and sound effects) designed to spot the time codes that will be used to guarantee a perfect synchronisation between sound and picture.

Dialogue box A secondary window requiring the user to enter information relating to an object in the main window or parameters for a given action.

Document management The management of any documentation.

Downloadable file A file found on a Web site, that can be saved onto a personal computer.

Dubbing Substituting a soundtrack in a foreign language for the original film or video soundtrack, so that the dialogue in the foreign version is synchronised with the lip movements in the original film or video.

Editing (Revision) The process of bringing a translation up to the quality required by implementing the necessary corrections and adaptations.

Editor (Reviser) The operator responsible for upgrading the translation and carrying out any corrections or adaptations needed to bring the translation up to the quality required.

Editorial translation The translation of documents requiring a degree of stylistic sophistication and virtuosity. By extension: translation for the publishing industry.

Executable version A computer programme which can be run directly by the processor, written in machine language and produced by compiling a source programme.

Expansion factor The differential between a translation and a source text in terms of volume – usually expressed as a percentage of the volume of the original.

Follow-up Anything that takes place after the translation has been completed.

Formatting The definition and application of a specific format to a digital document.

Frame Part of a Web page that remains independent from the other sections of the same page, and in particular, the part that remains visible on screen when moving from page to page.

Franchise The concession – against payment – of the right to use a specific kind of commercial know-how or a trademark in a given territory.

Freelance translator/Freelancer A translator working for her/his own account, who is not legally bound to an employer as a salaried operator.

Freeze (format/style sheet) Block any modifications to the format or style sheet of a document.

General translation The translation of documents which are not in any way specialised and/or are accessible to the general reader.

Icon A graphic symbol displayed on screen, which allows the user to select the particular function or software application represented by that symbol.

Indexing The generation of an index of keywords.

Information retrieval The retrieval of information from various documentation sources.

In-house translator A translator who is a salaried employee of a translation company or attached to a translation service.

In-house wording/in-house term or phrase Wording used by a particular company.

Knowledge base Part of an expert system containing all the data, in particular pertaining to the rules and facts relative to the system, defining the remit of the system.

Language engineering The techniques and procedures used in automatic human language processing.

Language industries Anything having to do with the large-scale processing of linguistic material or the provision of services involving languages.

Liaison interpreting Informal interpreting where the interpreter translates verbal exchanges between members of a small group of people.

Link A connection between two documents available on the Web, activated by clicking on a graphic symbol or on a segment of text designated as a link, and which facilitates navigation within a Web site, or access to different pages that may be located in other Web sites and on remote computers.

Load smoothing The redistribution and rescheduling of activities so that the workload does not exceed production capacity.
The balancing of various operators' workload.

Localisation The adaptation of a product and accompanying documents and materials for a certain market and/or group of users, taking into account specific cultural or linguistic features.

Localisation software Software designed to automate or facilitate all or part of the localisation process.

Localiser An operator involved in the adaptation of digital, digitized or digitally managed or processed material for use in a cultural and linguistic context different from the one for which it was originally designed.

Macro command (= macro) A computer programme which automatically carries out a specific predefined sequence of operations by repeating a command.

Mailing list A system that allows people to send to all of the other subscribers to the mail list so that people who may be using different kinds of e-mail access can participate in discussions together.

Mark-up Anything added to the content of the document to describe the text by indicating specific properties for each component item.

Match The perfect coincidence of meaning and form.

Match table A table containing matched text items in different languages which are deemed to be interchangeable in the same context and conditions: terminology matches, segment matches in translation memories.

Material The documents or items (*i.e.* text, code, soundtrack, menus, software application, etc.) for translation.

Measurement Assessment of the volume of material for translation (in terms of numbers of words or pages) or of the amount of work needed (in terms of time).

Multimedia product Interactive digital material including text, sound, images and video.

Can be an *offline* product (*i.e.* a CD-Rom) or an *on-line* product (*i.e.* a Web site).

Multiple pass translation A translation done in successive passes, where the first (junior) translator translates only whatever he/she knows is totally adequate, the second (more experienced) translator adds his/her contribution, and so on until the translation is complete.

No-frills translation A translation which does not necessarily comply with the original style and register, and which aims purely to transfer the original information as clearly as possible.

Neology The creation of terms.

Online help All the information that can be directly displayed on screen at the user's request, designed to facilitate and improve use of a software application.

On-line QC/QA The process of checking that a Web site or software application is fully operational under the actual conditions in which they will be used.

Outlaw A translator who does not pay any tax or social security contributions.

Overtitler (= Surtitler/Supertitler) The operator responsible for creating the over-titles (and, more often than not, actually displaying them during the live performance).

Overtitling (= Surtitling/Supertitling) The process whereby text is displayed above a stage in a theatre or opera house, to provide the audience with information about the performance or a translation of the dialogue.

Page makeup/Layout The preparation of a document (*i.e.* text, graphics, photographs, etc.) ready for printing.

Parallel translations Translations carried out at the same time.

Passive language A language which the translator can work with as a source language, but not as a target language (*i.e.* which she/he does not master sufficiently to comply with the required quality criteria).

Pencil and rubber assisted translation (PRAT) A translation done without using anything but paper and pencil.

Phraseological match list/ Phraseological match table The list of phrases or formulations for use in a translation, matched with the source phrases or formulations that they will replace.

Phraseological resources Dictionaries listing set phrases and linguistic stereotypes used in connexion with particular items or domains or activities or document types.

Phraseologist The operator responsible for processing the set phrases used in a given specialised field, a particular type of material or a given type of language.

Phraseology All the stereotyped phrases or segments used in a given specialised context.

Phraseology for translators Phraseological matches collected and validated in such a way that they can be used by translators.

Phraseology mining software/system Software designed to extract certain phrase segments from a corpus, on the basis of declared specific features.

Plain translation A translation which does not necessarily comply with the original style and register, and which aims purely to transfer the original information as clearly as possible.

Platform An IT environment, *i.e.* PC, Mac, UNIX...

PM (Project manager) The operator responsible for defining, planning, scheduling, managing, monitoring, controlling and reviewing a translation project.

Pop-up A small window that opens automatically above the main page when the user accesses a Web page. It may contain an advert, a help message, an invitation to respond to an online survey, etc.

Post-editing The revision of translations produced by translation engines, also called automatic translations.

Post-editor The operator responsible for upgrading (revising) the translation generated by a translation engine.

Post-translator An operator responsible for all operations carried out after the transfer phase and before dissemination, involving proof-reading or editing, rewriting, formatting, installation on a particular medium, etc.

PRAT (Pencil and rubber assisted translation) A translation done without using anything but paper and pencil.

Prepared translation The translation of material that has been pre-processed to include some of the terminology and phraseology required as well as indica-

tions on how to translate and accompanied by information and documentation designed to help the translator.

Pre-processed version A version of material for translation including various predetermined markers and tags indicating specific processing requirements and in some cases, including the terminology and even the phraseology required for the translation (or part of the translation).

Pre-translation All the operations carried out prior to the translation proper.

Pre-translator The operator responsible for all the operations carried out prior to the transfer phase (*i.e.* analysis, documentation, terminology, etc.).

Prime contractor In a sub-contracting agreement, the company sub-contracting to another company part or all of a job it has contracted to carry out for a work provider under a private or public procurement contract.

Project manager/PM The operator responsible for defining, planning, managing, monitoring, controlling and reviewing a translation project.

Proof-reader/Proofreader An operator responsible for checking the quality of a translation, correcting the most obvious deficiencies and identifying likely anomalies.

Proofreading A quality control process whereby likely translation errors or anomalies are *identified* and obvious linguistic or material errors corrected. The translator, not the proof-reader, is then responsible for making the necessary corrections or amendments.

Prospect management/Pre-sales The management of potential clients.

Pseudo-cloning of sites The translation of the contents of a Web site, and modification of part of its architecture, generally by adding or integrating new features (by creating or modifying links or by creating or modifying run-times or static or dynamic help functions) or by using a different site creation software application.

Pure text translation The use of basic word processing to translate text alone, excluding any other material included in or provided with the text.

Pure translation The use of basic word processing to translate text alone, excluding any other material included in or provided with the text.

QA (Quality assurance) Anything having to do with ensuring that the translation process will produce a result that meets all applicable quality standards required.

QC (Quality control) The process of checking that a product complies with all the expected quality criteria.

In common parlance: all the operations required to ensure that the product complies with the required quality criteria (usually synonymous with 'revision' when referring to translation).

Qualification of the translation An *in situ* test of the effectiveness of a translation (for instance by using the translated version of a user guide to operate a machine or use a product).

Qualified translation A translation which has been tested and passed as suitable for the purposes for which the source material was originally designed, especially when the material is part of a product or process.

Quality assurance (QA) Anything having to do with ensuring that the translation process will produce a result that meets all applicable specifications and quality standards.

Quality check The act of checking that a product complies with all the expected quality criteria.

Quality control/QC The process of checking that a product complies with all the expected quality criteria.

In common parlance: all the operations required to ensure that the product complies with the required quality criteria (usually wrongly equated with 'revision' when referring to translation).

Radio button An option button used, for instance, to change the size of a window.

Raw materials Terminology, phraseology, templates and any knowledge that will be input into the translation process and the translation.

Readme file A file containing information on a software application, thus called because this is usually the name given to the file, followed by the relevant extension.

Reviser The operator responsible for upgrading the translation and carrying out any amendments, corrections or adaptations needed to bring the translation up to the required quality level.

Revision The process of bringing a translation up to the quality required by implementing the necessary amendments, corrections and adaptations.

Rewriting The act or process of rewriting a text or document.

Scheduling The setting of dates for the beginning and the end of a sequence of activities or operations. Operations may be scheduled forward (moving forward from the moment the translation starts or start date) or backwards (moving back from the deadline or end date)

Script A written document describing each scene of a film, produced before the film is actually shot.

By extension: the transcript of film dialogue.

Seconded translator/Translator on secondment A translator employed by a translation company, seconded to work on a work provider's premises.

Selective translation (part translation) A translation in which only such information as has relevance for the client's purposes is kept. Relevance is usu-

ally determined with reference to one or more keys or 'items' that the client specifies.

Self-check forms Forms made available to the users of a particular Web site to allow them to test their knowledge or know-how.

Sequence The sequence in which various operations or activities must be carried out.

Simplified language/Controlled language A language in which any ambiguity is reduced or eliminated by applying a set of lexical or syntactical rules (*i.e. via* mandatory or proscribed word forms or sentence structures).

Simulation (1) The integration of subtitles in a video in order to check that they fit the dialogue and are perfectly readable.

Simulation (2) The temporary inclusion of subtitles to check that they are semantically and technically accurate and fit the display specifications.

Site cloning/Website cloning The process of re-integrating all the components of a Web site into the original site matrix and site architecture after translation, without further modification.

Site referencing The choice of special markers and keywords to ensure that search engines identify a Web site.

Sizing/Measurement Assessment of the volume of material for translation (in terms of numbers of words or pages) or of the amount of work needed (in terms of time).

Smoothing of workloads The redistribution and rescheduling of activities so that the workload does not exceed production capacity.

The balancing of the workloads of various operators.

Software localisation (software translation) All the operations necessary to create a specific version of a software application, along with all its accompanying material (Readme file, cover, online help, user guide, installation guide, etc.), so that it works smoothly and effectively and without any limitations whatsoever in a specific cultural and linguistic context different from the one for which it was originally designed. Mostly applies to any changes in a software application designed to adapt it for other users than those for whom it was originally designed. Localisation may or may not entail changes or additions to the software functionalities.

Software localiser The operator responsible for adapting a software application for a specific geographical-cultural area and/or language variety.

Software package A full set of computer programmes, complete with documentation, designed for use by a number of users as a given application or function.

Software translation (see software localisation)

Soundtrack An audio recording including all the sound elements of a film (*i.e.* voice-off narrative, dialogues, sound effects and music).

Source A presentation in readable text form of the sequence of coded instructions assembled by a computer programmer.

Source language The language of the material to be translated.

Source unit/Source item The basic unit in the source material.

Specialised translation The translation of materials relating to specialised subjects (*i.e.* technical or other) and/or translation requiring particular expertise in the use of special tools, techniques or procedures.

Speech recognition The conversion of a stream of speech into a text.

Speech synthesis The conversion of a written text into a stream of speech.

Spin-off A system whereby a company or group helps one or several of its employees to set up their own business.

Subcontracting translator/Subcontractor A translator who carries out work for a company without being a salaried employee of the company.

Subtitled The operator who creates the subtitles.

Supertitling (= Overtitling/Surtitling) The process whereby text is displayed above a stage in a theatre or opera house, to provide the audience with information about the performance or a translation of the dialogue.

Subtitling package Software designed to automate all or part of the subtitling process.

Summary translation A type of translation in which the information is presented as tables, synopses, or summaries. Maybe tabular, synthetic, analytical or itemized.

Swelling factor/Swelling coefficient The differential between a translation and a source text in terms of volume, usually expressed as a percentage of the volume of the original.

Synoptic translation A type of translation in which the information is presented as tables, synopses, or summaries. Maybe tabular, synthetic, analytical or itemized.

Tag/marker An item of code designed to identify a specific feature or property of the segment before or after the marker or tag.

Target unit of translation The basic unit in the translated material.

TC In/ Time code In The marker indicating the beginning of a spoken sequence corresponding to a subtitle.

TC Out/Time code Out The marker indicating the end of a spoken sequence corresponding to a subtitle.

Technical writing The production of technical documentation relating to products, concepts, processes or subject areas.

Term bank A specialised dictionary, accessed and managed electronically.

- Terminographer (also commonly called terminologist)** The operator responsible for collecting, compiling, managing, updating and disseminating terminology (*i.e.* specialised vocabularies).
- Terminological database/Terminology database** A specialised dictionary compiled so as to be accessed and managed electronically.
- Terminology** A consistent and coherent set of designations used in a specific field.
- Terminology** The science of specialised vocabularies.
- Terminology mining** The extraction of terms from a corpus, on the basis of declared specific features. Also: the retrieval of terminology and/or terminological information.
- Terminology resources** Various potential sources of terminology required for a given translation, including dictionaries, catalogues, item lists, glossaries, indexed Web sites, etc.
- Time code** A code used to index each image on a tape in terms of hours, minutes and seconds or even fractions of a second – used as a marker indicating the beginning or end of a spoken sequence in a subtitled video or film.
- Time code In (TC IN)** The time code indexing the beginning of a dialogue segment (and the corresponding subtitle.)
- Time code Out (TC OUT)** The time code indexing the end of a dialogue segment (and the corresponding subtitle.)
- Title card/card** A printed text displayed on screen. Often used for film credits. Used to be standard in silent films to comment on the action, between two scenes.
- Transfer** Substitution of material in one language for equivalent material in another language.
- Translating environment/Translation environment** All the items that make up the translator's workstation and all the human, software and documentary resources put to use in the process of translating.
- Translation for the publishing industry** The translation of material designed to be published.
- Translation agency** A company acting as a middleman between the work providers (*i.e.* the clients) and the translators (*i.e.* sub-contractors), while carrying out part of the work in-house. A (generally) small translation company run by one or several translators.
- Translation bureau** An organisation responsible for carrying out translations for a major national or international institution.
- Translation company** A company whose registered business purpose and main activity is translation carried out by in-house translators or by translators on secondment.

Translation engine A software application designed to replace a text in one language by a supposedly equivalent text in another language, without human intervention.

Software designed to carry out translations without human intervention.

Translation firm (also: translation bureau) Professional translators working in partnership to provide their services in certain language combinations and in one or more specialised fields.

Translation for gisting purposes A type of translation designed to just give the reader 'a fair idea' of the information-contents of a source document.

Translation memory A file in table format with segments of a text in one language matched with segments deemed to be 'equivalent' in another language.

Translation/localisation/subtitling/editing Kit All the hardware, software, documentary and other resources and references required by the translator, localiser, subtitler or reviser, to carry out a given job.

Translation-ready version A version of material for translation which has undergone all the necessary pre-processing so that it is ready to be translated by a human translator or a translation system as the case may be.

Translator for the media A person who translates audiovisual material.

Translator with publishing firms A translator who translates work for publication, working for one or more publishers.

Umbrella company system A system whereby a so-called umbrella company employs a translator on a temporary basis for the duration of a job, recovers all sums due for the translation, pays the necessary contributions and pays the translator a salary.

Voice recognition The transformation of a voice stream into written text.

The identification of specific words, phrases or discourse segments in a voice stream. The conversion of a dictated message into text.

Voice-over (= Voice over/Voiceover) A voice commentary superimposed on the original sound track in a different language from the original one heard in the background. The voice commentary does not fit the words spoken by a character or person seen on screen.

Watch translator A translator responsible for identifying and translating with the shortest possible time lag any material relating to specific predefined targets (e.g. persons, products, companies, activity sectors, events, etc.)

A translator responsible for continuously monitoring and processing commercial, technological or strategic information from selected 'rich' sources so as to make it available in the required languages and form.

Web address The address allocated by an Internet Service Provider, on which a Web site is hosted (a URL).

Web site localisation The adaptation of the contents and functionalities of a Web site for a group of users who share a number of specific cultural and linguistic features different from those for whom the site was originally designed.

Work provider A physical or legal entity providing work to an independent operator.

More generally: any company manager who has work carried out outside his company. In this case: anyone requiring translation done.

Writer The operator responsible for designing and writing the paper or digital version of documentation for a machine or product.

Further reading (and browsing)

www.eurologos.com/htm/Pages/page20en.asp (Bibliography of translation)
<http://www.benjamins.com/online/tsb/> (Online Translation Studies Bibliography; 90-day trial subscription)

http://www.common senseadvisory.com/research/reports_category.php (An absolute must for anyone interested in globalization, localization, or translation.)
http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inlain-inla.nsf/en/h_qs00040e.html (Survey of Language Industry Companies in Canada)
http://www.sign.ro/traducatori/articole/wb_survey.pdf World Bank – *Translation Business Practices Report*, 2004
<http://www.foreignword.com/Articles/Rogers/default.htm> (15 articles on Translation as a Profession)

<http://www.lisa.org> (Localization industry portal)
<http://www.euatc.org> (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies' portal)
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/index_en.htm (Portal of the Directorate General for Translation of the European Commission)
<http://jiamcatt.unsystem.org/french/resource.htm> (UN and other international organisations' Linguistic resources portal)

<http://www.proZ.com> (Directory of professional translation services by freelance language translators & translation agencies)
<http://www.foreignword.com> (Translators' directory)
<http://www.translatorscafe.com> (Directory of translators and agencies)

www.atanet.org (American Translators' Association)
www.fit-ift.org (International Federation of Translators)

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