10 IDEAS ABOUT REVISION

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Idea 1: Revision should be the least important factor in creating translation quality

Quality factors in ideal descending order of importance:

1. Training of translators
2. Assigning the right translator to a given text
3. Giving clear pre-translation instructions
4. Revision by a second translator

Measures 1, 2 and 3 *prevent* error.

Revision is a last resort, to correct those (inevitable) errors which measures 1, 2 and 3 failed to prevent.

Idea 2: The aim of revision is to make the text suitable for its purpose

- Suited to its future readers
  - "large vehicle fleet operator requirement" does not need to be revised for expert readers, but for non-experts it should perhaps be changed to "need for people to operate a fleet of large vehicles"
- Suited to the use that will be made of it
  - To make a decision? Just for information?

Idea 3: Select the quality level up to which you will revise

- Do not have just one idea in mind of what constitutes acceptable writing quality
- Depending on the use to be made of the translation and its readers, aim to create a translation that is:
  - *1. Intelligible* (roughly accurate, minimally readable), OR
  - *2. Fully accurate* (and fairly readable), OR
  - *3. Well written,* OR
  - *4. Finely crafted*

Idea 3 (continued): Do not revise to a higher level than is needed

- **For 'language people' such as translators, it is hard to refrain from changing sentences which seem less than well written.**

- Suppose you come across this fairly readable draft translation:

  The increase in the cost of the project is attributable to several reasons, including: ...

- Will you ask whether, in this particular text, it really does need to be changed to:

  There are several reasons for the increase in project costs: …

  Note that this change from level 2 to level 3 cannot be made quickly. The draft sentence must be completely replaced.

Idea 3 (continued): Once you have achieved the level sought, stop

- Make the translation *good enough* for its purpose.

- Once you have made changes that achieve the quality level you are seeking, banish the thought: "I'm sure there's an even better way to express this".

Idea 4: Revision is reading, not writing

Revision is not a literary, style-improving exercise.

It's an exercise in finding problems.

The key question in revision: Will you *notice* the big mistakes in the draft translation?

Idea 5: The default revision action is to do nothing

- Every time you make a change, you may introduce an error.
  - First, do no harm!
- If hesitant about whether a change is needed, make no change and move on.
- Be wary of the false feeling of satisfaction that comes from making many small changes.

Idea 6: Keep checking and correcting separate in your mind

- As you read, you may notice that a sentence is not concise.

- But you need to ask yourself whether conciseness is a goal for this translation.

- If it isn't, then don't stop to make the sentence more concise, even if a more concise wording comes to mind right away.

- Thus:

  1) spot potential problem

  2) *decide whether it really needs a change*

  3) if a change is not needed to make the translation suitable for purpose, don't make one

Idea 7: Avoid annoying those you revise

- Can I explain to the translator why this change is needed? (If not, don't make it.)
- Am I wasting time imposing my own approach to translating?
- Am I wasting time imposing my own linguistic preferences?

Idea 8: Use different degrees of revision

Depending on the reliability of the translator and the importance of the text:

- ◆ Do both a comparative reading and a monolingual reading
- ◆ Do just a comparative reading
- ◆ Do just a monolingual reading
- ◆ Read just certain parts of the translation (including some near the end where the translator may have been rushing)
- ◆ Scan for just certain features of the translation (e.g. client terminology)
- ◆ Just glance at the front page (first impressions!)

Idea 9: Empirical studies are needed to answer certain questions

- Is it better to revise on screen or on paper?

- Should one read the source text or the translation first during comparative checking?

- How many errors are not caught if revision is limited to a monolingual reading?

Idea 10: Formulate bad attitudes as a step to eliminating them:

- I wonder if this passage can be improved. (Of course it can, but does it *need* to be?)

- There are two ways of saying this: 'bear in mind' and 'keep in mind'. Which is better? (Why does one of them have to be better?)

- I'm being paid to revise, so I have to make some changes.

- This sounds better, so I'll substitute it.

- I would have translated it this way, so I'll just substitute that.

- I've just thought of a better translation, so I'll substitute it.