

## The Problems of Assessing the Quality of Written Translation

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**Abstract:** The article is devoted to an overview of various approaches to the development of quality criteria for assessing translation. The article examines various approaches to this issue, including subjective and objective systems, where the translator, and the second on precise measures, such as the number of errors in the translated text, base the first approach on assessing the linguistic decisions made. The approach to assessing the quality of translation is considered from various positions regarding the process itself and demonstrates how they change depending on who evaluates the result: the customer, the translator or the final recipient of the translated text.

**Keywords:** translation, translation solution, translation unit, translation quality, translation quality assessment.

Assessing the quality of translation is considered one of the most difficult and controversial problems today. For scientists and researchers, as well as for practicing translators, the question of what a translation should be and how it should be evaluated has not lost its relevance for decades. Moreover, even modern interpretations of the concept of “translation quality” are quite diverse and sometimes contradictory. In domestic translation studies, the quality of translation is traditionally correlated with the concepts of equivalence, adequacy and translation standards. In accordance with the theory of translation equivalence, the main criterion for “correct translation” is the identity of the source and target texts. Apparently, for this reason, one of the main research tasks for a long time was to find out what this identity is and how it is ensured [1]. The later designation of “correct translation” as an adequate translation is associated with the expansion of the boundaries of the linguistic approach and the realization that translation cannot be reduced solely to linguistic mediation [2].

In the process of teaching students to translate, an urgent problem is assessing the quality of translation. It is necessary to determine how good or bad the translation is, develop criteria for the quality of the translation and determine a rating scale. Comparison with the “ideal model” or key is impossible, since translation is a creative process and the number of good translation solutions can be endless, which is explained by the richness and diversity of the language. Thus, we can only talk about the relative objectivity of assessing the quality of translation. We can talk about objectivity, since language and speech function within the framework of norms and usage. The quality of translation is assessed based on an analysis of errors made in the translation. Since the text is a multi-level system, it is advisable to highlight errors at the level of words, phrases, simple sentences, complex sentences, text, and beyond the text level. Analysis of errors at the word level, for example, involves answering the question of whether semantic-structural correspondence to the original is preserved and whether lexical transformation is due. Errors are not uniform. We can conditionally distinguish the following error statuses: distortion, inaccuracy, ambiguity in accordance with the degree of non-conformity with the original. To construct a rating scale, it is also necessary to determine the measure of error or the cost of error (in points relative to 100% of the translation text). Thus, solving the problem of assessing the quality of a translation involves solving problems associated, firstly, with identifying text levels, secondly, with determining the status of an error, and thirdly, with determining the measure or cost of an error.

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The problem of assessing the quality of written translation is relevant for not only translators and translation agencies, but also for international organizations and corporations, government agencies, universities and other social and political institutions.

Over the past half century, a large number of theoretical approaches as well as practical quantitative systems for assessing translation quality have been presented. However, all of them are characterized by significant shortcomings and are not universal. There is still no generally accepted list of criteria for assessing the quality of written translation.

Currently, international, European and national standards for the quality of translations have been developed, and there are various types of accreditation of translators. But even this does not help solve the problem of assessing the quality of translation.

Theoretically, we can talk about the following most commonly used parameters for assessing translation quality:

- accuracy, clarity and adequacy of the translation: the meaning of the original text must be conveyed as accurately, correctly and intelligibly as possible, without any distortion
- correspondence of the style of the translated text to the original: for example, the translation of the strict language of a scientific article must remain short, clear and concise, while when translating a literary text, the translator must preserve and convey the atmosphere created by the author.
- maintaining the unity of terminology in the translation text; use of standard verbal constructions accepted in a particular field

In practice, the translation is assessed, first of all, by the customer himself. In this regard, the main difficulty lies in the fact that in most cases this assessment turns out to be very subjective.

Ideally, to adequately assess the quality of a written translation, the customer himself must speak a foreign language at a good level and understand the highly specialized subject of translation, which, you see, is not a common occurrence.

A person who does not know a foreign language and is not familiar with the subject matter of the translation can evaluate the quality of the translation only by certain formal criteria: check the correspondence of the number of pages and paragraphs in the original and the translation; pay attention to the spelling, punctuation and grammar of the translated text (if the translation is made into your native language).

The possibilities for assessing the quality of translation by a specialist who does not speak a foreign language, but is well versed in the subject of translation, are much wider: you can check the use of terms, make sure they comply with the glossary, check the translation for localization, taking into account the national and cultural characteristics of the residents of those countries for which the translation is intended.

Taking into account the ambiguity of the criteria for determining the quality of a translation, as well as the significant subjectivity of such an assessment, it can be assumed that the most successful translation is one that is performed by a specialist who not only has an excellent command of a foreign language and specializes in a specific field, but first of all knows the requirements of the customer, the specifics of a specific company or enterprise that owns the terminology commonly used there.

This condition can be ensured in cases where the customer works with the same translator or translation agency for a long time. Many translation agencies have the opportunity to assign the same translators and editors to their regular customers, who already know the requirements and specifics of a particular client, which, in turn, makes the translation process quick and high-quality.

Before moving on to the analysis of existing evaluation systems, most of which are based on various types of translation errors, it seems necessary to consider a number of features that characterize translated texts regardless of the language pair, text style or professional competence of the translator. Taking into account these universal features makes it possible not to confuse them with translation



errors and, as a result, not to include them in the assessment. These features of each translated text are the so-called “translation universals” or universal features of translation [3]:

discourse transfer: the desire to create a translation that is as close as possible to the original text at the lexical, syntactic, macrostructural, pragmatic and discursive levels;

tendency towards standardization: the tendency to select elements of the target language that are closest to its norm, i.e. the tendency to replace textual features of the original text with less stylistically or semantically expressive constructions;

explicitness: the tendency to express in a clear, didactic manner what was implied, implied, or abbreviated in the original;

markedness in the distribution of lexical units and a tendency to avoid repetition;

leveling out: the tendency to use language units with little connotation in the target text;

lexical and syntactic simplification: the use of more common synonyms than the terms used in the original text, the use of allegories instead of special terms in the source text, an approximate transfer of the realities of the original in case of cultural differences.

According to I.S.Alekseeva, the necessary basis for achieving equivalence is the minimum units that must be translated - units of translation (unit of translation) [2]:

Phonemes/graphics: personal names and geographical names, exoticisms, concepts new to the target language that can be conveyed using the transcription method (it is preferable not to replace the cultural realities of the original with equivalents if the reader is able to perceive the unadapted concept) [2].

Morphemes.

Words: this unit of translation can be carried out at several levels - when a word corresponds to a phrase or vice versa; or at the same level - when there is a correspondence between word and word.

Expressions: phraseological units, names of organizations, abbreviations, contextual meanings of the word.

Sentences: proverbs, clichés and set formulas: inscriptions, signs, politeness formulas.

Text and explicit functionality of the text, e.g. poetry, advertising. There is no clear boundary between the sentence level and the text level as a translation unit [2], since this classification depends on their functional meaning.

However, the choice of one option among the many and its expression at one of the levels of translation units may, in turn, depend on a set of factors, such as, for example, the functional marking of a word [3], since its more or less marked coloring can affect the text generally. The choice of a marked or neutral word depends on the context and therefore can also be assessed in accordance with the criteria of necessity and motivation proposed by I.Levy.

At different levels of translation units one can observe translation decisions, which in some cases are dictated not only by a system of linguistic correspondences, but rather by a system of cultural images. For example, elements of folklore or mentions of names that tell a lot to the reader of the original, but are unknown to the reader of the translation, often require replacement with a translation unit (sentence or text) that is similar in content and not in form [3]. On the other hand, if the translator is dealing with the pronunciation features of a character in the text, and he is faced with the need to convey speech features that are also not typical for the target language [2], as well as for the original, the translator carries out the phonetic level of translation units.

According to B. Mossop [3], each translated text must be subjected to two separate assessments: at the level of the cultural norm and at the level of the text as such, i.e. as if the text was originally written in the target language. However, B. Mossop believes that only an error discovered when assessing the level of a cultural norm constitutes a translation error. However, for a more complete assessment, he



also offers a third, optional level - compliance with the author's intent [4], applicable only if it is possible to obtain a comment on the text from the original author himself.

M. Williams proposes a classification of acceptable and unacceptable translations [3] depending on their quality, based on quantitative criteria: the number of errors made, which, in turn, are divided into serious and minor, measures the quality of the translated text. A serious error, according to Williams, consists of many factors, such as failure to interpret the meaning of an essential element of the message; contradiction or significant deviation from the original text; incomprehensible or erroneous language constructs [3].

M. Williams as define the first category "Grade A: highest quality." In the case of the highest quality translation, no major errors are made, and the number of minor errors can vary from 0 to 6. In such a translation, the meaning of the original text is accurately conveyed in idiomatically correct language corresponding to the theme and ultimate purpose of the original, and the terminology in the text is completely accurate and uniform [3].

In cases where the translated text has a large number of minor errors (from 6 to 12), but there are no major errors yet, it is assigned the category "Grade B: Completely Acceptable" [3]. In a translation classified as Category B, general compliance with the rules of the two languages is observed; the translated text is easy to read and generally understandable.

If the main elements of the message are conveyed reasonably well, but there is a serious error and/or several minor errors in the translation (from 12 to 18), the text is graded C: subject to revision [3]. The language of such a translation may deviate from established norms and be subject to various interferences from the source language; There may be a lack of precision or uniformity in the use of some terms.

If the translated text contains more than one serious error and several minor errors (more than 18 without an upper limit), it may be assigned a translation category of "Grade D: Unacceptable Quality" [4]. An unacceptable translation requires re-translating many passages to make the text understandable.

Summarizing what has been said on the issue of assessing the quality of translation and the criteria by which it should be carried out, we can highlight the main features for which the translator is responsible in the translation process. The classification of these signs given here is based on the theory proposed by L. Latyshev [1]. The following requirements apply to a translator working in this way:

reproduce intellectual, emotional, artistic, motivational, etc. potential impact of the original, and at the same time:

reproduce the content of the original text as accurately as possible;

adapt the content and linguistic structure of the translation to the target language in accordance with the given language system, its language norm, usage and culture of the recipients.

to preserve as much as possible the textual proximity (semantic and structural) of the translation to the original.

Thus, those who carry out the translation process are forced to combine completely different and heterogeneous data, both accurate, for example, quantitative information, and imprecise, for example, subjective observations, interpretations and personal experiences [2]. However, today only an expert can give a qualified assessment of the quality of a translation by comparing the source text with the translated one [3], as well as choosing a specific evaluation system or system.

With the development of new technologies, including those involved in the translation process, the number of studies devoted to the search for criteria for assessing the quality of the translated text is increasing. Linguists have developed various systems of approach to this issue, considering the problem from the point of view of both the translator, the customer, and the final recipient of the translated text. The variety of criteria and the current lack of a single system that could unite them



demonstrates that assessing the quality of translation is undoubtedly a complex issue that requires an integrated approach.

Summing up the results of this stage of the study, we note that the assessment of the quality of translation in the industrial sphere is focused, first of all, on the result, that is, the final product, which is the translation text. Although different companies may use different quality control systems, a number of common points can be identified. The assessment is carried out to determine the degree of readiness of the product, as well as for the purpose of ongoing quality control. This is an important component of the company's work and a kind of quality guarantee. The translation project manager, the editor from the performing company, as well as the customer's representative, can assess the quality of the translation. It is generally accepted that the main guidelines are compliance with the recommendations contained in professional standards and taking into account the specific wishes of the customer. However, practice shows that this does not eliminate the influence of the subjective factor: translation performers often note that the editorial changes and the claims made are controversial. Further prospects for our research are related to an in-depth study of this issue and the construction of a detailed structural and functional model of industrial translation on a refined basis.

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