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Translation projects — General guidance

Projets de traduction — Recommandations générales

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Language and terminology*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Translation, interpreting and related technology*.

This first edition cancels and replaces ISO/TS 11669:2012, which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

- there is an increased focus on the requester's and translation service provider's shared responsibility in developing translation project specifications;
- a description has been added of the key role that risk assessment plays, together with the initial needs analysis, in setting up the translation project;
- the informative annexes have been updated.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

The translation industry is changing rapidly and globalization is driving increased demand for translation. Technological innovation has stepped up to provide solutions designed to meet these needs, including making use of artificial intelligence and machine translation. Anyone who needs translation services has many options to choose from. To obtain translation output that meets requirements, those who need translation services should have a basic understanding of what a translation project involves. They should also know how efficient communication with a translation service provider (TSP) can help to ensure a successful translation project.

Efficient communication entails that requirements are explicitly defined and agreed-upon as translation project specifications. Successful translation projects are a result of:

- developing and following these translation project specifications,
- involving people with the appropriate competences and qualifications, and
- assuring smooth communication flows throughout the projects.

This document is primarily intended for persons who request translation services, but it can be useful for all stakeholders in a translation project, such as TSPs and end-users.

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Translation projects — General guidance

1 Scope

This document gives general guidance on all stages of a translation project. Its main purpose is to ensure efficiency and quality by enhancing communication among the parties involved in the translation project.

This document provides a framework for developing translation project specifications that are the basis for requesting, setting up, managing and evaluating translation projects. It also includes guidance on needs analysis, risk assessment and workflows, but it does not provide procedures for evaluating the quality of translation output.

This document is primarily intended for those who request translation services. However, it can also be relevant for the translation service providers and the end users of the translation output.

It is applicable to all sectors, including the commercial and government sectors, and non-profit organizations.

It does not apply to interpreting services.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 20539:—¹⁾, *Translation, interpreting and related technology — Vocabulary*

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3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 20539 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1 General concepts

3.1.1

source language content

content to be translated

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.1.5, modified — “or interpreted” has been removed in the definition.]

3.1.2

target language content

content translated from a source language

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.1.6, modified — “or interpreted” has been removed in the definition.]

1) Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: ISO/FDIS 20539:2023.

3.1.3

translation service

production and delivery of *target language content* (3.1.2) according to *translation project specifications* (3.2.5)

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.3.4, modified — “specifications issued by a client” has been replaced by “translation project specifications” in the definition.]

3.1.4

revision

bilingual editing

bilingual examination of *target language content* (3.1.2) against *source language content* (3.1.1) for its suitability for the agreed purpose

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.2.6, modified — “bilingual editing” has been added as an admitted term. Note 1 to entry has been removed.]

3.1.5

review

monolingual editing

monolingual examination of *target language content* (3.1.2) for its suitability for the agreed purpose

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.2.7, modified — “monolingual editing” has been added as an admitted term. Note 1 to entry has been removed.]

3.1.6

proofreading

examination of the final *target language content* (3.1.2) and application of corrections before submission to the client

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.3.12, modified — “proofread” has been replaced by “proofreading” as the term. “examine” has been replaced by “examination of” and “apply” has been replaced by “application of” in the definition.]

3.1.7

evaluation of translation output

evaluation

bilingual examination of *target language content* (3.1.2) against *source language content* (3.1.1) while classifying any errors with respect to *translation project specifications* (3.2.5) and for the purpose of reaching a *quality* (3.2.2) rating

[SOURCE: ISO 5060:—,²⁾ 3.1.4, modified — Note 1 to entry has been removed.]

3.1.8

post-editing

checking and correcting *machine translation* (3.4.2) output

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.1.13, modified — “editing” has been replaced by “checking” in the definition.]

3.2 Concepts related to translation projects

3.2.1

requirement

need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory

Note 1 to entry: “Generally implied” means that it is custom or common practice for the organization and interested parties that the need or expectation under consideration is implied.

2) Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: ISO/FDIS 5060:2023.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.6.4, modified — Notes 2 to 6 to entry have been removed.]

3.2.2

quality

degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an object fulfils *requirements* (3.2.1)

Note 1 to entry: The term “quality” can be used with adjectives such as poor, good or excellent.

Note 2 to entry: “Inherent”, as opposed to “assigned”, means existing in the object.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.6.2]

3.2.3

translation project

coordinated and controlled activities, with start and finish dates, set up to deliver a *translation service* (3.1.3)

3.2.4

translation project parameter

translation parameter

attribute of a *translation project* (3.2.3)

3.2.5

translation project specification

defined and agreed upon *requirement* (3.2.1) that is related to a *translation project parameter* (3.2.4) and that is used for producing translation output

3.2.6

quality check

examination of *target language content* (3.1.2) to determine its conformance to *translation project specifications* (3.2.5)

Note 1 to entry: In-process quality checks, such as *revision* (3.1.4), *review* (3.1.5) or *proofreading* (3.1.6), take place during the execution (production) stage of a *translation project* (3.2.3).

Note 2 to entry: Quality checks for specific aspects of the target language content, such as spelling, terminological consistency and completeness, can be performed with the help of tools.

Note 3 to entry: *Evaluation of translation output* (3.1.7) is a form of quality check that includes measurement and that often takes place after the execution (production) stage of a translation project.

3.2.7

use case

description of a specific situation in which an output or service can potentially be used

3.2.8

service level

performance targets for a service

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17826:2022, 3.49]

3.2.9

risk

effect of uncertainty on objectives

Note 1 to entry: An effect is a deviation from the expected — positive and/or negative.

Note 2 to entry: Objectives can have different aspects (such as financial, health and safety, reputational and environmental goals) and can apply at different levels (such as strategic, organization-wide, project, product and process).

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 73:2009, 1.1, modified — “reputational” has been added to Note 2 to entry. Notes 3 to 5 to entry have been removed.]

3.2.10

risk assessment

overall process of *risk* (3.2.9) identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 73:2009, 3.4.1]

3.2.11

risk management

coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to *risk* (3.2.9)

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 73:2009, 2.1]

3.2.12

risk tolerance

organization's or stakeholder's readiness to bear the *risk* (3.2.9) in order to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: Risk tolerance can be influenced by legal or regulatory *requirements* (3.2.1).

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 73:2009, 3.7.1.3, modified — “after risk treatment” has been deleted from the definition.]

3.3 Concepts related to people involved in translation projects

3.3.1

requester

person or entity making enquiries with the view of commissioning a *translation service* (3.1.3)

Note 1 to entry: The requester usually receives the translation output for their own use or on behalf of the end users.

Note 2 to entry: In situations where the requester proceeds to commission a translation service, they can also be considered as a client from the perspective of the translation service provider that will provide the translation service.

3.3.2

translator

person who renders *source language content* (3.1.1) into *target language content* (3.1.2) in written or other recorded form

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.1.12, modified — “translates” has been replaced by “renders source language content into target language content in written form or recorded form” in the definition.]

3.3.3

language professional

person who has the competences and qualifications to perform tasks in translation and translation-related services

EXAMPLE *Translator* (3.3.2), reviser, post-editor, evaluator.

Note 1 to entry: A language professional can be a translation service provider (TSP).

3.3.4

target audience

person or group of persons for whom *source language content* (3.1.1) or *target language content* (3.1.2) is intended

[SOURCE: ISO 10209:2022, 3.14.42, modified — “person or” has been added at the beginning of the definition. “information for use” has been replaced by “source language content or target language content” and “by the supplier” has been removed.]

3.4 Concepts related to translation technology

3.4.1

translation memory

TM

digital repository of aligned *source language content* (3.1.1) and *target language content* (3.1.2)

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.1.6, modified — “of aligned source language content and target language content” replaced “used to store and retrieve previously translated content matched with source language content”.]

3.4.2

machine translation

MT

automated translation of content from one natural language to another using software

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:—, 3.5.1.8]

3.4.3

unedited machine translation output

UEMT output

raw machine translation output

output of *machine translation* (3.4.2) that has not been *post-edited* (3.1.8)

3.4.4

termbase

terminology database

database comprising a terminological data collection

[SOURCE: ISO 30042:2019, 3.28]

4 Context of translation projects

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4.1 General

Translation projects are set up when someone needs to transform content in written form from one language into one or several other languages. For a translation project to produce a result that meets the requester’s and the end users’ needs and expectations, these stakeholders should agree on translation project specifications based on the relevant requirements. The translation project specifications should be created with reference to translation project parameters and should play a central role at all stages of the translation project.

This document structures the guidance on translation projects according to the following stages of a translation project.

- The initiation stage is a preparation stage where the requester carries out an initial needs analysis and a risk assessment and selects a TSP.
- The planning (or pre-production) stage builds on the result of the analysis conducted during the initiation stage. It includes the preparation of the source language content and the development, finalization and documentation of the translation project specifications.
- The execution (or production) stage involves creating the translation output in conformance with the agreed-upon translation project specifications.
- The closing (or post-production) stage covers the exchange of feedback and, where appropriate, the evaluation of translation output based on the translation project specifications.

In addition, this document gives guidance on two transversal activities that are essential throughout translation projects: risk management and project communication.

Figure 1 gives an overview of the main elements of each stage.

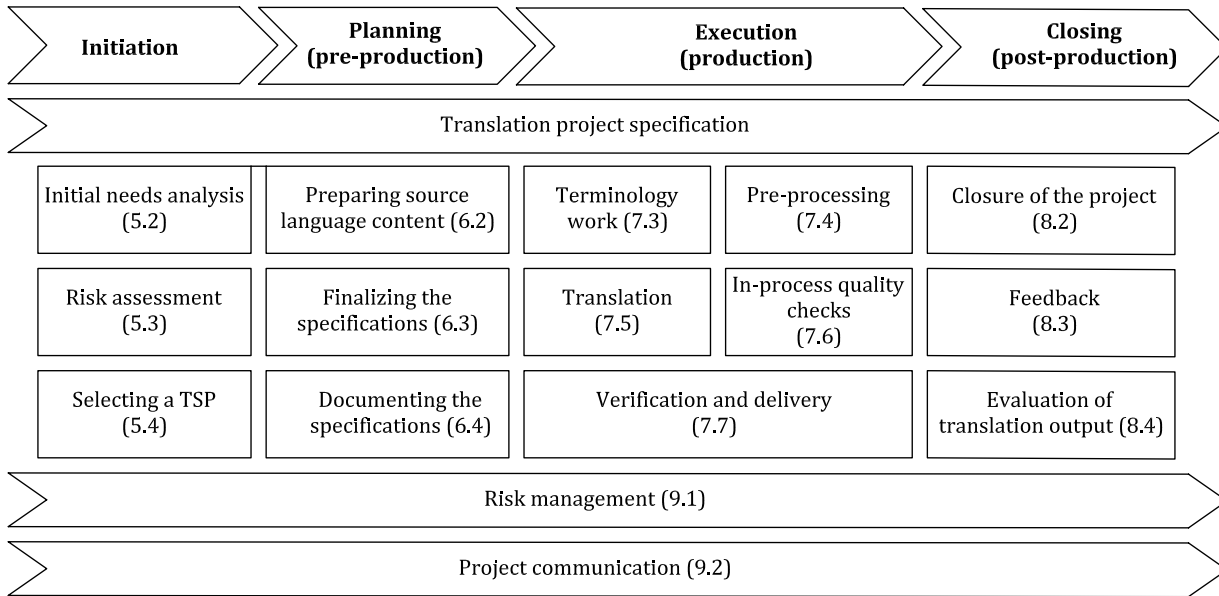


Figure 1 — Translation project stages

4.2 Translation standards

This document aims to complement other standards in the field of translation. ISO 17100, ISO 20771 and ISO 18587 define requirements for translation services.

The processes set out in these International Standards can be used to provide translation services for different use cases. The TSPs can advise the requesters on the appropriate standard to apply based on the requirements.

ISO 5060 gives guidance on the evaluation of translation output.

There is currently no International Standard that sets requirements for the use of unedited machine translation (UEMT) output. For more information on using UEMT output, see [Annex A](#).

4.3 Translation project parameters

Translation project parameters are used to transform requirements into translation project specifications. This document recommends that translation project specifications always be created using translation project parameters. This approach ensures that all requirements relevant for a specific translation project are defined and agreed upon in a structured way. The full set of translation project parameters is organized into the following three categories:

- Content parameters, which include languages and locales, type of content, target audience, purpose, domain, terminology, content correspondence, style, language register, target language conventions, format, complexity, origin and volume.
- Process parameters, which include technology, pre-processing, translation, in-process quality checks and additional tasks.
- Other project parameters, which include risks, reference material, workplace requirements, permissions, qualifications, security, confidentiality, delivery, compensation and communication.

Table 1 illustrates how to use a translation project parameter to define relevant translation project specifications with the help of guiding questions.