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Translation services — Evaluation of translation output — General guidance

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Services de traduction — Évaluation des résultats de traduction — Recommandations générales

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Services de traduction — Évaluation d'un texte résultant d'une 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 documents 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*.

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

Globalization, the accompanying growth of the translation market, the professionalization of translation services and the growing availability of online machine translation tools have driven the demand for standardized and harmonized principles and procedures for the evaluation of translation output.

In an industrial world in which products have to comply with clients' and legal specifications, translations have to be regarded as a product that has to fulfil certain requirements. The systematic comparison of a target language content with the source language content giving regard to the translation project specifications provides the means to arrive at a valuable and objective judgment of achievement.

This document provides guidance for the evaluation of human translation output, post-edited machine translation output, and unedited machine translation output. It also provides guidance on the qualifications of the evaluators. The role of sampling is also discussed in this document.

The guidance provided in this document can also support the evaluation of source texts intended for translation.

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Translation services — Evaluation of translation output — General guidance

1 Scope

This document provides guidance for the evaluation of human translation output, post-edited machine translation output, and unedited machine translation output. Its focus lies on an analytic translation evaluation method using error types and penalty points configured to produce an error score and a quality rating.

This document focusses on the human evaluation of the translation output only and follows an approach designed to reflect minimum complexity. The reason behind this approach is to keep this document applicable for as many users as possible in the translation industry.

This document does not deal with related elements such as the processes of assuring the quality of the translation output and corrective actions.

This document is intended to be used by translation service providers (TSPs, be they individual translators, translation companies or inhouse translation services), their clients and other interested parties in the translation industry.

This document does not apply to interpreting.

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, *Translation, interpreting and related technology — Vocabulary*

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 terminological 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

translate

render *source language content* (3.1.7) into *target language content* (3.1.8) in written form or signed language

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2019, 3.1.7]

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3.1.2

translation

set of processes to render *source language content* (3.1.7) into *target language content* (3.1.8) in written form

Note 1 to entry: A translation can refer to formats other than text-based formats (e.g. an audio file, image, etc.).

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.1.2, modified – “may” changed to “can” in Note 1 to entry]

3.1.3

revision**bilingual editing**

bilingual examination of *target language content* (3.1.8) against *source language content* (3.1.7) for its suitability for the agreed purpose

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.2.6, modified – content of note changed to admitted term]

3.1.4

evaluation of translation output**evaluation**

bilingual examination of *target language content* (3.1.8) against *source language content* (3.1.7) while classifying any *errors* (3.4.1) against *translation project specifications* (3.3.2) and for the purpose of reaching a *quality rating* (3.3.10)

Note 1 to entry: The term “assessment” is frequently used as a synonym for evaluation. While both involve inspection, “evaluation” is the preferred term, since formally there are some differences. Evaluation is product-oriented and judgmental (to accept or reject a product), whereas assessment is process-oriented and diagnostic (to provide feedback on how to improve the process used to produce the product). The preference for “evaluation” is also to avoid the confusion that the abbreviation “QA” gives rise to, mostly referring to quality assurance.

3.1.5

corrective action

action taken to eliminate the cause of nonconformities or *errors* (3.4.1) during *translation* (3.1.2) or *target language content* (3.1.8)

Note 1 to entry: Corrective action involves an investigation to identify what went wrong and what action can be taken to ensure that it does not happen in the same way again.

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.5.5, modified –plural deleted in “nonconformity” and “in the translation process” changed to “translation”]

3.1.6

content

information in any form

EXAMPLE Text, audio, video, etc.

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2019, 3.1.2]

3.1.7

source language content

language *content* (3.1.6) to be *translated* (3.1.1)

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.3.2]

3.1.8

target language content

language *content* (3.1.6) *translated* (3.1.1) from *source language content* (3.1.7)

[SOURCE: ISO 17100:2015, 2.3.3]

3.1.9**translation output**

result of *translation* ([3.1.2](#))

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2019, 3.3.3]

3.1.10**client-TSP agreement**

mutual acknowledgement that sets forth the provisions and conditions of a translation service

Note 1 to entry: This can take the form of a contract, memorandum of understanding (MOU), verbal agreements, e-mail, etc. A verbal agreement can be documented in writing.

3.1.11**translation service**

production and delivery of *target language content* ([3.1.8](#)) according to a *client-TSP agreement* ([3.1.10](#))

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2019, 3.3.4, modified – “client specification” changed to “client-TSP agreement”]

3.1.12**locked segment**

bitext segment in a translation memory for which access has been restricted in order to prevent it from being changed or edited

3.2 Concepts related to the people involved in the evaluation process**3.2.1****evaluator**

person who performs *evaluation of translation output* ([3.1.4](#)) in accordance with the rules of the *evaluating entity* ([3.2.2](#))

3.2.2**evaluating entity**

individual or group of people within an organization which determines the *translation evaluation strategy* ([3.3.3](#))

3.2.3**translator**

person who *translates* ([3.1.1](#))

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2019, 3.1.11]

3.2.4**reviser**

person who performs *revision* ([3.1.3](#))

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2019, 3.3.10]

3.2.5**translation service provider****TSP**

person or organization that performs translation service

[SOURCE: ISO 20539:2019, 3.3.5]

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3.3 Concepts related to the evaluation process

3.3.1

requirement

need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.6.4, modified – notes deleted]

3.3.2

translation project specifications

set of agreed upon and defined *requirements* (3.3.1) for producing *translation output* (3.1.9)

Note 1 to entry: ISO 17100, Annex B, lists a set of potential project specifications.

3.3.3

translation evaluation strategy

organization-wide policy implemented on the basis of the specific purpose for the *evaluation of translation output* (3.1.4)

Note 1 to entry: The purpose for the evaluation of translation output can vary from project to project. Therefore, it might be necessary to apply various translation evaluation strategies.

3.3.4

translation evaluation system

set of steps and actions performed during the *evaluation of translation output* (3.1.4) implemented on the basis of the *translation evaluation strategy* (3.3.3)

3.3.5

translation evaluation specifications

principles for the *evaluation of translation output* (3.1.4), based on the *translation project specifications* (3.3.2)

3.3.6

translation evaluation sample sample

amount of *content* (3.1.6) taken from *target language content* (3.1.8) to be submitted to an *evaluation of translation output* (3.1.4)

3.3.7

sampling

defined procedure whereby a part of the *translation output* (3.1.9) is selected to provide a *translation evaluation sample* (3.3.6)

3.3.8

translation evaluation scorecard translation evaluation scoresheet

table containing all relevant *error types* (3.4.3) with their assigned *penalty points* (3.5.1), for the purpose of producing an *error score* (3.3.9) for the evaluated *translation output* (3.1.9)

3.3.9

error score

result of the *evaluation penalty point total* (3.5.4), in relation to the number of characters, number of words, or number of lines evaluated in the *translation output* (3.1.9)

3.3.10

quality rating

classification of the *evaluation of translation output* (3.1.4), based on comparing the *error score* (3.3.10) with an applicable *error score threshold* (3.5.9) and rating system