10. The Revision Parameters

The revision parameters are the things a reviser checks for – the types of error. An exhaustive listing of things that can go wrong when translating would be very long indeed. However in order to think about and discuss revision, it is convenient to have a reasonably short list of error types. In this book, we'll use twelve parameters, divided into four groups. Here they are, expressed as questions about the translation, followed by a single capitalized word for convenience of reference:

Group A – Problems of meaning transfer (Transfer)

1. Does the translation reflect the message of the source text? (Accuracy)
2. Have any elements of the message been left out? (Completeness)

Group B – Problems of content (Content)

3. Does the sequence of ideas make sense? Is there any nonsense or contradiction? (Logic)
4. Are there any factual, conceptual or mathematical errors? (Facts)

Group C – Problems of language and style (Language)

5. Does the wording flow? Are the connections between sentences clear? Are the relationships among the parts of each sentence clear? Are there any awkward, hard-to-read sentences? (Smoothness)
6. Is the language suited to the users of the translation and the use they will make of it? (Tailoring)
7. Is the style suited to the genre? Has correct terminology been used? Does the phraseology match that used in original target-language texts on the same subject? (Sub-language)
8. Are all the word combinations idiomatic? Does the translation observe the rhetorical preferences of the target language? (Idiom)
9. Have the rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation, house style and correct usage been observed? (Mechanics)

Group D – Problems related to the visual rather than verbal aspect of the text (Presentation)

10. Are there any problems in the way the text is arranged on the page: spacing, indentation, margins, etc? (Layout)
11. Are there any problems related to bolding, underlining, font type, font size, etc? (Typography)
12. Are there any problems in the way the document as a whole is or-

ganized: page numbering, headers, footnotes, table of contents, etc? (Organization)

Remember that this list is for discussion and reflection about revision practices. It is not for use as a checklist while actually revising in a professional setting (though it might be used as such in a classroom setting). Obviously, you are not going to go through each sentence twelve times! As we'll see in Chapter 11, however, you may want to refer to the four groups of parameters before you begin, in order to decide the degree to which you will revise.

Some translation departments and agencies do give their translators revision checklists containing items such as "all translatable text has been translated" and "client's terminology has been used". While such lists are useful as reminders, it is hard to see how they could be used in any practical revision procedure. If the checklist contains twenty items, there is no time to consider each of them in turn after reading each sentence of the translation.

You may want to read some of the earlier chapters of this book for more information on some of the parameters that are of concern not just to revisers but also to editors (parameters 3 to 12). Chapter 3 looks in detail at the various aspects of Mechanics as well as Idiom. Chapter 4 has sections on Tailoring and Smoothness. Chapter 6 covers Logic and Facts.

If you work in a situation where a proofreader (who is not a translator) will look at the translation prior to publication, you may not need to worry about the Presentation parameters or about compliance with house style (parameter 9), except for those aspects which affect meaning: you must always check commas, which can have a serious impact on how a sentence is interpreted by the reader, as well as words and phrases which are bolded, underlined or italicized, since these features will affect focus. If there is no proofreader, then you the reviser must deal with these parameters, and in particular ensure a certain minimum 'beauty' of presentation.

Aside from the parameters discussed in this chapter, revisers may also have to check for consistency, which is considered separately in Chapter 7.

Let us now look at the twelve parameters in detail.

10.1 Accuracy

Unless you have specifically been asked to prepare an adaptation, or your client is paying a premium for extra high writing quality, accuracy will be the most important feature of the translations you are revising. Generally speaking, the first task of a professional translator is to guarantee that the translation means (more or less) what the source means (or to be more careful – what you think the source means). More particularly, you as a reviser must ensure that there are no major mistranslations – passages which could seriously mislead the reader about an important feature of the source text's message.

Accuracy is not limited to the level of words, phrases and sentences. Indeed, perhaps the most important aspect of accuracy is the correct rendering of the overall structure of the message: the sequencing of events or arguments must be the one in the source text. So when checking for accuracy, you need to pay special attention to words like 'however' and 'then'.

An accurate translation does not have to be a close translation. Accuracy has nothing to do with whether the translator has used vocabulary and sentence structures of the target language which are as close as possible to those of the source language. Accuracy has strictly to do with the message in a passage. More particularly, accuracy certainly does not mean reproducing poor writing; many translators consider it their duty to improve the quality of the writing.

Accurate does not mean source-oriented. A translation in which you have replaced or eliminated a metaphor, added a cultural explanation or used a functional equivalent of a cultural feature (sports, cuisine) can still be considered accurate, though there are limits (see the next section on Completeness).

Just how accurate does a translation have to be? Not as accurate as possible, but as accurate as necessary, given the type of text and the use to be made of the translation. Ephemeral texts, which will be read and discarded, and not used to make important decisions, do not need to be as accurate as publications, or documents which will be used for important decisions. There is no point spending five minutes searching for the *mot juste* which conveys the exact nuance if the translation is going to be read quickly and tossed away.

Suppose the source text is the minutes of a meeting. It mentions that an official gave an interview to a journalist at lunch-time. The draft translation says 'spent his lunch hour giving an interview'. This is not quite accurate – it implies that the entire lunch hour was spent giving the interview. But the key point has been made: an interview was given. What percentage of the official's lunch hour this occupied is utterly irrelevant. It would simply be a waste of time revising the draft.

In written translation, unlike oral, it is possible to go over and over a text, making it more and more accurate, so that not only the main message but even tiny details are reflected in the translation. But the fact that this is possible is not a reason to do it. Not only may it be a waste of time, but over-attention to accuracy can result in an unreadable text. Every scrap and nuance of meaning may have been crammed in, but the resulting sentence may be awkward, disjointed, in short hard to read. Readers of some texts (e.g. certain legal documents) may prefer such extreme accuracy, but others will simply stop reading or (if their jobs require them to read the document) they will be distracted from the message by the language.

More generally, there is a trade-off between Accuracy and the Language & Style parameters, especially Tailoring, Smoothness and Idiom. It is probably wishful thinking to imagine that a translation can be both extremely readable and extremely accurate. At the higher levels of accuracy, a degree of readability is inevitably sacrificed, while at the higher levels of reader-friendliness, accuracy must suffer. The trick is to identify the right balance for the job at hand.

The question whether a translation is accurate is actually two questions:

- Has the source text been correctly understood?
- Does the translation express that understanding?

The most common kind of inaccuracy arises from incorrect understanding of the source. But inaccuracy can also arise when the source has been correctly understood. The translator may believe that this understanding has been expressed in the translation, but in fact it has not. The readers are likely to interpret the wording the wrong way. This problem most often arises because the translator has written a syntactically ambiguous sentence.

Finding such potentially dangerous ambiguities is a good example of the superiority of revision by a second translator over self-revision. A second pair of eyes is more likely to see the incorrect reading, because there is no prior bias toward the correct reading.

Sometimes inaccuracies are actually necessary, for political or ideological reasons. Consider the institution in Quebec City whose official name until recently was 'Bibliothèque nationale du Québec' (national library of Quebec). It was sometimes just called the 'Bibliothèque nationale' (national library), but it could not be called the 'National Library' in English because that name would evoke, for English-Canadians, the institution in the federal capital Ottawa whose official name used to be 'National Library of Canada'. The problem for the reviser here is not simply that of ensuring the reader is not confused about which institution is being referred to. There's also an ideological problem, because the names reflect different understandings of the country: the French reflects the belief in a Quebec nation which happens to be part of a federation called Canada; the English reflects the belief in a Canadian nation consisting of three territories and ten provinces, one of which is called Quebec. With some clients and readerships, the reviser may need to ensure that the translation reflects the English-Canadian outlook: 'Quebec provincial library' or something of the sort. Some might call such deliberate inaccuracy a minor form of censorship.

A final point on accuracy: numbers are often an important part of the message. If the translator has turned an unemployment rate of 6.8% into a rate of 8.6%, that is a major Transfer error if unemployment is an important topic in the text. In any text where numbers are central to the message, it's a good idea to make a separate check for their accurate reproduction.

10.2 Completeness

Unless specifically asked to write a summary or gist, or provide an adaptation, translators are usually expected to render all the message, and only the message, that is in the source text – No Additions, No Subtractions (NANS).

Some 1900 years ago, in a letter to his friend Fuscus advising him to while away his retirement translating Greek into Latin, the Ancient Roman writer Pliny the Younger wrote: "What might have eluded your notice while reading cannot escape you when translating". Pliny presents this as an advantage (Fuscus will be able to delve more deeply into the Greek text), but from another point of view, it is more a burden borne by translators: readers can skip over an obscure passage, but translators cannot. Translators must try to come up with an interpretation of every expression, and, with few exceptions, this full interpretation must be reflected in the translation.

The most common completeness error is unintentional omissions, but the translator may also have unwittingly added ideas that are not present, even implicitly, in the source. The reviser must be on the lookout for such additions, for, as Andrew Marvell put it some 350 years ago:

> He is Translation's thief that addeth more
> As much as he that taketh from the store
> Of the first author. ...

Unwitting additions may occur when the text is on a topic about which the translator has strong feelings: an alleged child murderer's 'statement' becomes his 'confession'.

Apart from unintentional omissions and additions, the translator may also have deliberately eliminated a portion of the source text message or added material that is completely new (not even implicit in the source). For example, a tourist guide may have been used as a springboard for composing a guide in another language: much material has been left out because it was thought not to be of interest to target-language readers, and much else has been added to make the destination attractive to these readers. Another possibility is that the translator decided to make a dreary text more lively and interesting, perhaps by adding metaphorical comparisons or humour. Or the translator did some content editing because there are differences between what it is appropriate to say in an obituary in the source-language community and in the target-language community. If there are more than a few such additions and subtractions, the reviser turns into a bilingual editor, and might decide to turn the checking work over to someone else.

The NANS principle should not be taken too literally. First, small additions and subtractions are inevitable; there is usually no point going through a translation with a fine-toothed comb searching for tiny nuances of meaning that have been added or subtracted. For example, cultural or technical explanations may have to be added; as the reader's advocate, the reviser keeps an eye out for passages where the reader will need help.

Second, the NANS principle really only applies to *relevant* meaning. Some of the information in the translation will be very important to the readers, some less important. Thus if the text is a complaint containing a great many expressions of the complainant's emotional state, some of these can be omitted if the point of the translation is simply to allow an official to determine the substance of the complaint. Or take a text on the causes of avalanches which begins with a description of the researchers arriving in an alpine village and lists some of the flowers growing in the meadows. The whole passage could be summarized or omitted.

Third, always keep in mind that the NANS principle refers to the text's message, not to its wording. Completeness does not require the reproduction of the repetitiveness typical of poorly written source texts. Indeed, the reviser should generally ensure that such repetitiveness has been eliminated. However if this is likely to be a time-consuming task, and excellence of style is not a consideration in the job at hand, any repetitiveness can be left in the translation.

Completeness also does not require explicitness. Elements of meaning which are explicit in the source text can be left implicit in the translation. There is no problem of completeness as long as a reader can recover these elements by drawing either on general or expert knowledge or on knowledge conveyed *earlier* in the text (not later!). Now, it is not always obvious whether this condition of recoverability is met. You may err in either direction, thinking that the element is recoverable when it is not, or thinking that it is not recoverable when it is. The former error is more serious, since there will then be an omission in the final translation. The latter error merely leads to a needless (and therefore time-wasting) revision, as you make the element of meaning explicit. Obviously if you are in doubt, you will ensure that the element is explicit.

Leaving message elements implicit, together with elimination of redundancy, are especially important when only a small, predetermined amount of space is available for the translation. If these techniques do not work, then perhaps a different font or smaller font size, or reduction of interlineal spacing, might solve the problem. But in some cases, it may be necessary to simply omit material.

Completeness might be thought to be an aspect of Accuracy, but it is worth mentioning separately because the source of the problem, as well as the solution, is often mechanical in nature. The translator's eye may have skipped a point in a long list of bulleted points. Or a whole passage may have been skipped when a phrase was repeated in successive sentences or paragraphs: the eye, returning to the source text from the translation, went to the second occurrence of the phrase, even though the material after the first occurrence had not yet been translated. A key function of the reviser is to find such accidental omissions.

If the translation was produced by typing over the electronic source text, then it is unlikely that paragraphs, or items in a point-form list, will have been omitted. But if the translation was produced from a paper document (a printout of a .pdf document for example), it may be a good idea to make a count, in order to ensure that no list items or paragraphs have been left out. Note that if you do find a mismatch in the number of paragraphs, it may not be a case of omission, because the translator may have decided to combine or split paragraphs.

A final point on completeness: if the source text is provided electronically, bear in mind that there may be various forms of hidden writing which are not immediately displayed on the screen, and may not appear even on a printout. If the translator is not too familiar with the software, whole chunks of source text may have been missed. A very simple example: the translator is looking at the Normal view of the text in Word, and as a result does not see the headers and footers, which are visible only in Page Layout view. More complex forms of hidden text occur with presentation software (PowerPoint) and in HTML files.

You can find any hidden text by pressing the Microsoft Office button in Word 2007, pointing to Prepare, and then clicking Document Inspector; check Hidden Text, and press Inspect.

10.3 Logic

While a translation may well express ideas you find silly or outrageous, there should generally speaking not be any nonsense, contradictions between sentences, impossible temporal or causal sequences, or other logical errors. Each part of the translation must make sense to the reader in its context. Lack of logic can take two forms:

1. The source text itself is illogical, and the translator has not done anything about it.

One can usually assume that the author intended something which makes sense, but poor expression has resulted in nonsense or contradiction as the reader's most likely interpretation. Sometimes the intention will be very clear from the context, as when an author accidentally self-contradicts by claiming that the unemployment rate has gone up from 9.8 to 8.9 percent. However care must be taken in such cases: *either* 'up' could be wrong *or* the figures may have become inverted. If the figures are confirmed by an accompanying graph, or by a reference to a smile on the face of the employment minister, then 'up' can confidently be changed to 'down'.

Here's an example of a passage that will likely be read as contradictory:

> Search the patent website to determine whether there are any inventions similar to yours. If your preliminary search is negative, you can either drop your invention or make an improvement to it.

Here the translator has not done anything about the source-text word rendered as 'negative'. It makes sense if 'negative' is taken to mean 'disappointing' (i.e. someone has beat you to this invention), but many readers will take it, on first reading, to mean a negative search outcome (i.e. no one has beat you to the invention). But then, if no one has beat you, why should you drop the invention or make an improvement to it?

Now consider this sentence:

> The short-term consequences are temporary and do not last very long.

In context, it was clear that 'short-term' meant 'short-lived'. So the first part of the sentence is a tautology; it tells the readers, regarding the short-term consequences, that they are short-term. Also, the word 'and' suggests that further information about the consequences is about to be imparted, but 'do not last very long' is nothing but a re-statement of 'temporary'; the second part of the sentence is redundant. Revise to 'The consequences are temporary'.

Let us note in passing that the logical connections between sentences in source texts may be very unclear because the author composed it by stringing together a collage of sentences from a variety of materials found in a database of corporate documentation, and then failed to do appropriate editing to create a logical sequence of thought, or worse, added connectors without careful thought (for example, added 'consequently' even though there is no cause-effect relationship between the sentences). In some cases, the lack of a logical link between sentences can be solved by starting a new paragraph at the beginning of the second sentence. However in other cases it may not be possible to create logical links unless the author is available and willing to clarify their intent.

2. The source text makes sense but the translator has introduced nonsense or contradiction.

Among student trainees, such nonsense often arises from lack of source-language knowledge; among experienced translators, it arises from attention waning when rushed or tired. Consider this bit of nonsense that crept into a translation from French about the medical consequences of excessive coffee drinking:

> There was fear of playing the game. Americans reduced their consumption of coffee.

A gloss of the source text for the first sentence would be 'fear played' (French 'la peur a joué'). The meaning is that fear (of negative health consequences) came into play and (therefore) Americans reduced their consumption of coffee.

Here is an example of contradiction being introduced by the translator:

> We are making use of innovative technologies because the latest advances are not affordable.

Now, if you cannot afford the latest technologies, how can you make use of them? Here the source text was actually discussing how to make innovative use of technologies, that is, how to use the older technology more cleverly. The translator was reading quickly or not being attentive, and read 'innovative' with 'technologies' instead of with 'use'. (The French was 'utilisation innovatrice des technologies', which means 'innovative use of technologies', but the word 'utilisation' appeared at the end of one line and 'innovatrice' at the beginning of the next line, bringing it visually closer to 'technologies'.)

Logic is also discussed in Chapter 6.3.

10.4 Facts

Although checking a text for factual, conceptual and mathematical errors is not a central task of translators, such errors are obviously of communicative importance; they will be spotted immediately by readers of the translation who are subject-matter experts. Clients will appreciate it if these errors are not simply skipped over in silence. They are most often present in the original, but they may sometimes be introduced inadvertently by the translator. If they are present in the original, you need to ensure compliance with the client's wishes, which may vary: make corrections in the translation; list and describe the errors in a separate document; call the author of the source text and get agreement to changes in its wording.

In some cases, the source text author's ignorance of the true facts may be significant; in this case, correction during translation would not be appropriate. However it may be necessary to indicate in some way that the error is due to the author, not the translator.

Here's an example of a translator introducing a factual error. While re-reading a translation of the findings of an administrative tribunal, you come across this sentence:

> The common law courts have already dealt with the charges of robbery and extortion in the matter before us.

The intended readers will all be knowledgeable about the law, and will immediately see that there is something very wrong here: robbery and extortion are matters of criminal law, not common law. Furthermore, the reference is to a trial in Quebec, which does not use English common law but French civil law derived from the Napoleonic Code. A glance back at the French source text reveals that there was no error in the original, which referred to 'les cours de droit commun'. This means 'the ordinary law courts'. (The French term for courts outside Quebec that deal with common law matters is 'cour de common law').

Note that this is not merely a mistranslation. There is an important difference between the Content parameters (errors in Facts and Logic) and the Transfer parameters (Accuracy and Completeness). For someone comparing the translation to its source, there may not seem to be much difference between Content and Transfer errors, but the effect on the readers of the translation is not the same. Transfer errors will often pass unnoticed, if they make sense, but the same is not true of Content errors. Logical errors and in particular factual errors are immediately obvious to subject-matter experts and they call into question the competence of either the source-text author (if the reader does not know the text is a translation) or the translator.

For more on factual and conceptual errors, see Chapter 6.2. For mathematical errors, Chapter 6.4.

10.5 Smoothness

This parameter and the next two (Tailoring and Sub-language) cover the area commonly called 'style'. Smoothness is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.2.

Generally speaking, the meaning should come across to the reader on first reading at normal reading speed. If it does not, the problem will often be one of poorly organized sentence structures or poor connections between sentences, perhaps due to careless imitation of the word order or the connector words ('this', 'therefore') of the source text. An example of a common problem is poor sequencing of verb tenses from sentence to sentence, as well as improper selection of tense. In translation from French, for example, a common form of the verb can be rendered in English either by the simple past or the perfect (a translator was hired / a translator has been hired); both may be perfectly grammatical, but often only one will fit the flow of the argument.

Unsmooth writing in the source cannot justify unsmooth writing in the translation. Varying degrees of smoothness are acceptable, but the appropriate degree is determined by the user and use of the translation, not the smoothness of the source text.

One thing that can definitely interfere with a smooth reading experience for the typical reader (i.e. one who does not know the source language) is the presence in the translation of many source-language phrases, for example, names of institutions and titles of publications. In some genres, notably legal documents, source-language names may be required. In others, action should be taken to reduce them. Since the first duty of a translator is to translate, it is important for the reviser to check that the translator has minimized source-language words.

Smoothness has become a more pressing concern in recent years because many translations now include passages pasted in (manually or using Translation Memory) from previous translations or from client documentation that was originally written in the target language. The joins between the pasted parts and the translator's own work may not be smooth. More on this in Chapter 14.5.

> *Terminology note*: The literature on translation sometimes uses the term *cohesion* to refer to Smoothness and the term *coherence* to refer to Logic. Simply put, cohesion is the flow of words, coherence the flow of ideas. The problem with these two terms, which have been borrowed from linguistics, is that they are so similar. The result is that if you read a reference to 'cohesion', for example, you have to stop and try to remember whether it refers to Smoothness or Logic.

10.6 Tailoring

The translation has to be suited to its readers and to the use they will make of it. For example, if the document gives instructions for installing a video card in a computer, you must imagine a typical computer user following the sequence of actions set out in the translation.

The translation must have the right 'level of language', that is, the right degree of formality and technicality and the right emotive tone, and the vocabulary must be suited to the education level of the readers and to their knowledge of the subject matter of the text. The degree of formality of the source text is largely irrelevant; the reviser must instead ask whether the text in the target language has the right degree of formality or technicality for its future readers. Consider:

> While no cure has yet been found for AIDS, there are a number of treatments which can prevent the opportunistic diseases from appearing.

An opportunistic disease is one of the diseases which people are prone to if their immune systems have been impaired by HIV. The expression is well known to doctors and AIDS activists, but is not really suited to a general readership. If this translation will appear in a pamphlet to be distributed to the general public, it needs to be tailored to its audience, perhaps with a paraphrase: 'prevent the diseases which HIV-positive people often get'.

The readership may be very narrow or very broad. With narrow readerships (that is, all intended readers are subject-matter experts), you may need to check that the translator has used what would normally be undesirable language, for example, the latest fads of bureaucratic jargon. Otherwise, the text may not appear to be addressed to its intended audience.

Even if the readership of the translation will be similar to the readership of the source text, the use to which the translation will be put may well differ from the use of the source text. For example, the source text may be a transcript of oral proceedings – the words were used to make an argument in court – but the translation will be read silently as a reference by attorneys working on another case. You need to check that most of the features of oral language (false starts, repetitions) have been removed, since they are liable to cause confusion or slow the process of reading. Just the occasional repetition or interjection should be left to remind the reader of the oral nature of the source text ('he...he said that, well, ...').

Tailoring is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.1.

10.7 Sub-language

Each genre (text type) and each field of writing in the target language draws on a different selection of the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical resources of that language. A syntactic example: minutes of meetings are normally presented in the past tense in English; French, on the other hand, uses the present. Thus minutes would be grammatical but inauthentic if they contained a sentence like 'Mary reports on client complaints'. Genres may also differ in the degree to which they prefer noun-based structures ('the exigencies of penury') or the less formal, more speech-like verb-based structures ('the things that you have to do if you're poor'). Finally, every genre in the target language will have its own structure: there is a typical way of structuring recipes or academic papers that may differ from what is found in the source language.

The most obvious aspect of sub-language that requires checking is field-specific terminology. In most translation jobs, the terminology has to be that used by specialists who are native speakers of the target language, or else the in-house terminology specified by the client. However, with texts being translated for information only, clients may accept wordings that convey the meaning even if they are not terminologically correct. Many revisers believe that subject-matter experts will be annoyed if they find anything other than the correct term in the translation. I think that in general this is not true. The subject-matter experts who read our translations are not 'language people' like us; the typical forest scientist is interested in trees, not the language used to talk about trees. Experts tend to 'read through' language to the non-linguistic world in which they are interested. We should not project onto them our own interest in linguistic matters.

One common problem is that it may not have occurred to the translator that a sequence of ordinary words of the source language is in fact a term. In meteorology, French 'vents en altitude' should not be translated 'winds at high altitudes' or 'high above the ground'. Instead one speaks of the 'upper winds' or the 'winds aloft' – an expression which sounds faintly poetic/archaic in everyday English but is quite neutral and very common in meteorology journals.

In some translation jobs, revising to create authentic phrasings would be a waste of time. For example, if the authorities who decide on eligibility for disability benefits have asked for translations of an immigrant's old medical reports, the important thing is to get the medical content correct. The readers know perfectly well that they are reading a translation, so there is no need for it to sound authentic, i.e. just like original writing by doctors in the target language.

Authentic phrasing and terminology should actually be avoided in some cases. For example, if revising the translation of an inquiry from a citizen about a legal matter, make sure it does not contain legal phrasings that would only be used by a lawyer, so as to avoid creating the impression that the source-text writer is a lawyer. If revising a translation of a letter from an unemployment insurance recipient, use the expression 'apply for benefits' even though the civil servants who deal with this matter use 'apply for benefit' (with 'benefit' in the singular) in their own writings. If revising the translation of a Belgian court proceeding for reading by British attorneys, it may be a good idea to make sure the translator has *not* used British legal terminology, so as to avoid creating the impression that the Belgian justice system is just like Britain's; if French 'procureur du roi' or Dutch 'procureur des Konings' has been translated 'Crown prosecutor', revise to something like 'king's prosecutor'.

10.8 Idiom

In every language, only some of the grammatically possible combinations of words are actually used. These are the idiomatic combinations. If a text contains unidiomatic wordings ('Immigrants are needed to match gaps in the workforce', instead of the idiomatic 'fill gaps'), that will distract native speakers of the language from the informational content of the text. In some cases, an unidiomatic turn of phrase may also make them wonder whether something different is intended (perhaps 'matching gaps' means something other than 'filling gaps'). Of course, if most of the readers will not be native speakers (as is quite often the case with texts in English these days), this problem of distraction will not be so important.

In editing work, lack of idiomaticity is usually not a problem unless the writer is not a native speaker. However in translation, the situation is very different. Notoriously, translators – even good ones – are prone to producing, under the influence of the source text, unidiomatic combinations such as 'washed his teeth'. This combination of words is perfectly grammatical in English, and understandable, but it is not used. In English, you clean or brush your teeth. There is no rhyme or reason to idiomaticity; you simply have to know which combinations are the idiomatic ones. This is perhaps the main reason why those revising the work of others should ideally be native speakers of the target language.

Some instances of unidiomatic language may be considered creative or witty by native speakers (innovative language is by definition unidiomatic). However, outside literary and marketing texts, or humorous passages that call for unusual language, this is not a consideration.

After years of translating, you may sometimes find that you are not sure whether a certain expression really is idiomatic English, rather than a calque of the source language. A good dictionary will then reassure you that, for example, 'set a process in train' is definitely English, not a calque of French 'mettre en train'. Or simply look up the uncertain expression in Google (see Chapter 8.1).

In an extended sense, checking for idiomaticity also includes checking for anything that 'we just don't say' in the target language. Consider this passage from a translation on peregrine falcons:

> Despite the various protective measures that had been taken, there was a slight unexplained decrease in the peregrine population in the area. This clouded the previously hopeful outlook and was feared to be the sign of a new and this time disastrous decline of our peregrine, possibly leading to extinction.

In French, 'notre pèlerin' (literally 'our peregrine'), meaning the peregrine populations living in 'our' area of the world (in this case, French Switzerland), is perfectly acceptable. But in English, we don't use the first person plural possessive adjective this way, at least not in an article in an ornithology journal (perhaps it might work in a birding column in a local newspaper). 'Our' needs to be replaced with 'the'.

In this extended sense, checking for idiomaticity also includes keeping an eye out for differential frequencies of linguistic features. For example, a sentence structure may be perfectly grammatical in the target language but not as frequent as in the source language. Generally speaking, the less frequent a feature, the more punch it has, so the effect in the target language will in such cases be too strong. In translations from French, one often finds sentences like the following, already discussed in another connection in Chapter 8. It comes from an English-Canadian newspaper reporting, in translation, what a Quebec judge had written in French:

> It's not because you are in politics that you forsake the right to protect your reputation.

This structure is grammatical in English, but it simply isn't used much. It appears in draft translations as an imitation of the common French structure 'ce n'est pas parce que x que y' (it is not because x that y). French sentences with this structure should usually be inverted: 'You do not forsake the right to protect your reputation simply because you are in politics'. Or, if the word 'reputation' needs to be stressed: 'The fact that you are in politics does not mean that you forsake the right to protect your reputation.'

The question of frequency also extends to checking matters that may be ranged under the broad heading of comparative stylistics. For example, French often uses rhetorical questions where English would not; it frequently repeats a sequence of nouns where English would use a shortened version of the noun sequence or a pronoun ('your request for legal opinions…your request….it'); and French has a tendency to express a point in the negative where English would use the positive ('The fact that he controls less than 40% of the shares doesn't mean that he doesn't control the company any more' instead of 'He may still control the company even though he controls less than 40% of the shares').

Idiom is also discussed in Chapter 3.4.

10.9 Mechanics

Aside from finding any errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage, you may need to ensure that the text conforms to any style manual or house style sheet that has been specified for the particular job you are revising. See Chapter 3.2 for more on style sheets.

It is especially important to find mechanical errors when revising text that will appear on homepages, on public signage and in prestigious publications.

If the translation has been prepared by typing over an electronic version of the source text, be sure the punctuation and number-writing conventions of the source language have been replaced with target-language conventions. For example, in French-to-English translation in Canada, the shape of quotation marks must be changed from «....» to "..." , the space before a colon must be eliminated, and 4 000,21 $ must be replaced with $4,000.21. There are, unfortunately, dozens of such small mechanical details that may need to be checked, depending on your language pair.

Capitalization may require special thought when it comes to the translation of proper names, titles of articles and so on, in order to avoid misleading the reader. For example, if the title of a source-language document is referred to in the source text, and this title is then capitalized in the English translation, that will lead the reader to think, possibly wrongly, that the book is available in English.

The two languages may differ in the way they use devices like parentheses. Consider:

> Glass walls must offer a good view from the guard post in order to ensure security (riots, suspect parcels, etc).

where the material in the parenthesis has no syntactic link to the rest of the sentence. This is acceptable in French but not in English. The wording needs to be changed to something like: '...from the guard post so that staff can handle security problems (riots, suspect parcels, etc)'. With this change, 'riots' and 'suspect parcels' are in apposition to 'problems'.

10.10 Layout

A page crammed with type is hard to read, so check for adequate margins and adequate spacing between sections.

Check too that layout remains consistent. Are all paragraphs either indented or not indented (or as in this book, all indented except for the first paragraph in a section)? Are all point-form listings similarly positioned? Are parallel headings similarly placed on the page (e.g. are all chapter titles centred)?

Checking the layout is particularly important if some readers are likely to compare the source and the translation (for example, the text in both languages is to be published as a single document). If the texts are both simultaneously visible, and one is noticeably shorter than the other, some readers may think elements of meaning are missing. You may want to avoid this by using layout devices that give the illusion of equal space being devoted to each language (for example, if the texts are side-by-side, use a narrower column for the shorter text).

Clients may specify as part of the brief that the layout should follow that of the source text. Revisers should check that this has been done, unless the genre rules of the target language dictate a different layout (as in letter-writing).

If the translation will be published, there may be a proofreader who will check layout, which can then be ignored by the reviser.

10.11 Typography

The main things to check for here are moderation and consistency. It will be hard to read a text in which too many words are bolded, italicized, capitalized, underlined or coloured. Also, be sure each device is consistently used for the same purpose (e.g. bolding to pick out special terminology; italicization for any source-language words retained in the translation).

Where the source text uses bolding, italicization or underlining for emphasis, make sure this has not been mechanically repeated in the translation. The emphasis must make sense in the target language. Even if there is a proofreader, this aspect of typography needs to be considered by the reviser because it affects meaning.

Check that all headings of the same depth (e.g. subsections) have the same typographic treatment. Are they all bolded? Are they all the same font size? If font size changes for indented material, does it change back to the original size after the indent ends?

10.12 Organization

The organization of the translation as a whole is important in enabling readers to navigate through the text and perceive its structure.

Check, for example, that page references in the body of the text are correct; the passage referred to may well be on page 26 of the source-language document, but it may be on page 24 of your translation. (If the translation will be published, the precise page numbers will not be known until after delivery of the translation, so this potential problem needs to be signalled to the editor of the publication.)

Also make sure that the numbering or lettering of headings, subheadings, chapter/section titles, figures and tables, as well as their wording, exactly match that found in the Table of Contents. Sometimes translators (or revisers!) change a section heading in the body of the text but forget to make the same change in the Table of Contents. Word processors do contain a feature for automatically creating and revising a Table of Contents, but many source-text writers find it hard to use.

If there is an error in numbering in the source text (e.g. section '6' is followed by another section '6'), make sure this is reproduced in the translation unless the client approves a correction. Signal the error in a note.

If material is presented under each of a series of alphabetized headings in the source text, make sure to alphabetize the headings in the target language after you finish comparing the two versions.

Finally, don't forget to check isolated bits of prose such as headers and footers, and captions.

Further reading

(See the References list near the end of the book for details on these publications.)

Error types and terminology: Delisle *et al.* (1999); Hansen (2009b); Bertaccini and Di Nisio (2011).