12. Revision Procedure

Almost all discussion of revision tends to focus on the types of error the reviser should look for – the parameters of Chapter 10. But that is not enough. You need to know not only *what* to look for, but *how* to look for it. To state the obvious, *you cannot correct a mistake until you have found it*. It is all very well to know that the translation should have a level of language suited to the readers. The question is: will you *notice* that a particular phrase has an unsuitable level of language? You need to have a procedure that increases the likelihood that you will find the errors in a translation. And when you arrive at a passage that you think perhaps requires correction or improvement, you also need some *principles* to help you decide whether in fact to make a change.

Noticing problems in a translation is the most difficult aspect of revision. Revisers frequently overlook clear-cut problems. Why is that? Two possible reasons are that they are working too fast and that they are not paying the right kind of *attention* to the text. The reviser's mind may be focused (perhaps to some degree unconsciously) on language and style problems, and the result is that transfer problems are not noticed, or vice versa. In addition, the reviser may be attending to micro-problems such as an error in number agreement and not notice macro-problems. So in this sentence:

> Customers are reminded that the sale of tobacco products are limited to those 18 years of age and younger.

you might notice the error in number agreement (*sale…are*) but not notice that the sentence says the opposite of what is intended. Or, depending on your focus of attention, you might notice the meaning problem but not the grammatical one (the plural verb *are* is right next to the plural noun *products,* so the error might escape your notice, especially if you are reading quickly).

12.1 Procedure for finding errors

We'll assume that if you are revising someone else's work rather than self-revising, you have already determined who the users of the translation will be and what use they will be putting it to, and you have made yourself aware of any special instructions the client may have given (about terminology, about layout etc). We'll also assume that you have selected a degree of revision; that is, you've answered the following two questions:

- Am I going to check the entire text, or just parts of it?
- Am I going to check only Content, Language and Presentation (henceforth CLP) parameters, or am I going to check Transfer parameters as well?

Suppose you have decided to check Transfer parameters (Accuracy and Completeness) as well as CLP parameters. In other words, you are going to make a comparative check, not just a unilingual check of the translation itself. The question then arises: in what order are you going to check the parameters? More specifically, you need to ask the following questions:

- Shall I check the CLP parameters at the same time as I make the comparative check, or shall I make two separate checks?
- If I make separate checks, shall I make the comparative check first, or the CLP check first?
- If I make separate checks, shall I do the entire text at once (for example, read the entire text for CLP, then for Transfer) or shall I work a paragraph or two at a time, or a section at a time (for example, read a couple of paragraphs for Transfer, then read them for CLP, then move on to the next few paragraphs)?
- Shall I read the source text first or the translation first during comparative checking?
- How many words should I read at one go during comparative checking?

These five questions will be considered in the sections that follow.

One check or two?

If you have enough time, you may find it best to perform separate checks for Transfer and for CLP. The reason is that detecting one type of error can get in the way of detecting the other type. For example, you are less likely to spot a lack of Smoothness in the transition from one sentence to the next if you are comparing sentences one at a time against the source text. You are also less likely to notice that a sentence in your translation is unidiomatic if you have just read the source text: the wording of the source text may get in the way of your target-language judgments. If you do have time for only a single check, this latter problem can be avoided by reading each sentence of the translation *before* you read the corresponding source sentence.

Unfortunately, even if you do two separate checks, you may still encounter a difficulty we'll call the micro/macro dilemma. Some errors manifest themselves in a single word or phrase. Is this term right? Is this word combination idiomatic? Other errors manifest themselves over larger stretches of text. Is the sequence of tenses right? Are the inter-paragraph connections clear? Are the headings consistently formatted? You may find it hard to focus on problems of the former kind (micro-problems) at the same time as you check for problems of the latter kind (macro-problems).

The micro/macro dilemma mainly affects the unilingual check, where you are reading the translation without comparing it to the source. (Comparative re-reading by its nature tends to have a micro-level focus.) Take the example of Logic. A contradiction may not come to your attention unless you are reading the text through with a specific focus on the flow of the argument or narrative. If you are also looking for micro-problems of Language and Presentation as you read along (e.g. Mechanics), your attention may be distracted from a contradiction in the thoughts being expressed.

If you have time, you could do two unilingual checks, first looking for macro-problems, and then for micro-problems. Even then, you may not be able to attend to all macro-problems at once. Consider consistency of Layout. If you are focused on Logic, will you spot the fact that, starting at the top of page 20, paragraphs are no longer indented? (Perhaps the translator started page 20 one morning and forgot that the previous day they had been indenting.) This argument suggests yet a further separate check, but of course that will most often be impractical. With practice (and depending on your own psychology) you may be able to attend to several types of macro-problem at once, or, hopefully, both macro- and micro-problems at once. One possible way of helping yourself focus on microlinguistic problems, without getting distracted by the overall message of the text, is to read the text backward, beginning at the last sentence.

It is perhaps worth bearing in mind that there is as yet no empirical confirmation that doing two or more checks yields a better result than a single check. Many translators are sure that it does, and it would certainly seem that it should, but the whole point of empirical testing (see Appendix 6) is precisely to determine whether what seems obvious is in fact true. Robert (2012) found that the final quality resulting from comparative re-reading was higher than with unilingual re-reading, but she also found that doing two re-readings, one of each type, failed to make a further significant improvement. Presumably many of the errors that would have been corrected during a single, unilingual re-reading were corrected during comparative re-reading. (This by the way suggests that anyone who wishes to focus separately on accuracy and on language and style, and to that end decides to do two re-readings, should do the unilingual re-reading first. If the comparative re-reading is done first, there will be a tendency to make language and style changes as soon as they are noticed.)

Comparative check first or last?

To answer this question, there are three considerations, which unfortunately may not all lead to the same conclusion.

First, all other things being equal, you should read the translation alone first, without comparing it to the source text. This is especially so when you are revising someone else's work, because you have a golden opportunity to see the translation from the user's point of view. You are not burdened by prior knowledge of what the text is supposed to be saying – knowledge which the translator possessed from reading the source text. Your knowledge of the message is coming from the translation alone.

A second consideration is the problem (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter) of introducing errors while revising. Suppose you do the CLP check first, and then the Transfer check, but during the Transfer check you introduce

Language errors. There is no further check that would enable you to find these new errors. So it may be worth determining which type of error you are more prone to introducing – language errors or mistranslations. If you are more prone to introducing language errors during the Transfer check, then check for language errors last. If you are more prone to introducing mistranslations during the Language check, check Transfer last. Determining which type of error you tend to introduce is unfortunately not easy. In the course of revising a half dozen texts, you will have to save a copy of the text after you complete the first check, then save a copy after the other check, then compare the two using the Compare function of your word processor (see Chapter 8.4). Ideally, you will discover that you don't introduce errors, but it is a good idea to be sure that this is indeed the case.

The third consideration is related to the second. Quite apart from your own error-introducing tendencies, there is the question of whether the job is one in which language and style are especially important. If they are, you may want to do the CLP check second, to ensure you catch any Language errors that you introduced during the Transfer check. Of course this runs counter to the first consideration mentioned above: you will not be reading the translation the way the user will, without benefit of prior knowledge of the source text.

Read the whole text or work a few paragraphs at a time?

Once again, if you want to try to duplicate the final user's experience, you will start by reading through the entire translation from start to finish. If you come to an odd passage, where you wonder what the source text says, make some kind of mark and come back to it later during the comparative check. If you keep interrupting your reading to make a comparative check, you may lose track of macro-features such as the flow of the argument. Your attention to flow is going to be interrupted enough as it is whenever you stop to make a correction.

Read source text first or last during comparative checking?

Let's take special note of an issue that was mentioned briefly earlier in this chapter, namely the order of reading during comparative checking: translation first or source text first? Here, happily, all the considerations point in one direction. Read a sentence of the translation first, then the corresponding sentence in the source text. Reading the source text first has several disadvantages:

- If you are checking Language at the same time as you check Transfer, your reading of the source text may influence your judgment about the language quality of the translation. In particular you may fail to notice that the translation is unidiomatic.
- Reading the source first may make you think of your own translation – the last thing you want to have in your head when revising someone else. You should never compare the translation in front of you with your

own mental translation.
- Your reading of the source text will put in your mind the meaning which the translation is supposed to have. When you come to read the translation, you may project this meaning onto the translation. You may not see that the translation does not in fact have this meaning. This is particularly a problem if the target-language sentence happens to be ambiguous: it has two possible interpretations. Reading the source sentence first may have the effect of cueing in your mind the interpretation which corresponds to the source, whereas the reader of the translation may take the other interpretation.
- You will not see the text from the user's point of view (the user will not be reading the source text first!)

If you are self-revising, and you want to avoid the last two of these disadvantages, it is a good idea to leave the longest possible time between completing your draft and starting your revision. Unfortunately this is very often not practical: because of the deadline, you may have to start your self-revision as soon as you have completed the draft translation.

It should be pointed out that there is only a single empirical study (Künzli 2009) which looks at this question of reading order, among other matters, and the result was inconclusive: reading the translation first made a difference with one of the texts under study but not with the other two. In the absence of empirical grounding, we must rely on logic, deducing a recommended procedure from a hypothesis (in this case, the hypothesis that reading the source first will make it more difficult to make an independent judgment of the translation).

Size of unit to read during comparative checking

The answer to this question partly depends on individual psychology. How big a unit of text in one language can you keep in mind while you read the text in the other language? One general principle does seem valid: avoid reading a *very* small unit in one language and then turning to the text in the other language. Such a practice will not give you enough context, and it will increase the likelihood of your overlooking bad literal translations. Consider this sentence:

> Given the concentration required by translation, and the numerous details a translator must deal with, often within more or less reasonable deadlines, one cannot expect a perfect translation.

If you read the whole sentence paying attention to meaning, you can immediately see that something is wrong: 'more or less reasonable' means 'fairly reasonable' and this doesn't fit. Given our knowledge of the topic, we expect to read 'often within unreasonable deadlines'. Now if you were reading this sentence phrase by phrase, and you compared 'often within more or less reasonable deadlines' to the French source text ('souvent dans des délais plus ou moins raisonnables'), you might not detect any problem. The match seems perfect: at the word level, 'plus ou moins' equals 'more or less'. However, French 'plus ou moins raisonnable' means 'not so reasonable', emphasizing the negative, whereas English 'more or less reasonable' emphasizes the positive. If you are lucky, a warning bell goes off in your mind every time you come across 'more or less' in a translation from French, but a surer way to avoid disaster in such a case is to avoid reading small chunks of sentences.

12.2 Principles for correcting and improving

Having looked at procedures for finding errors, let us now look at some principles for making changes as you check. It is important to keep checking and correcting (or improving) distinct in your mind. Revising is checking a translation and *possibly* making changes. You may identify a passage as a candidate for a possible change, but then decide not to actually make any change. For example, you see that a sentence is somewhat awkwardly structured, or not as concise as it could be, but you decide not to do anything about this.

It is best to use a three-step process: 1) spot a potential problem; 2) decide whether a change is merited; 3) make a change if you deem it necessary. Step 2 is the crucial step.

The first two correcting/improving principles we'll look at concern cases where you absolutely must make a change. The remaining four tend in the opposite direction; they are variants on a single principle: Minimize corrections.

1. If you cannot understand the translation without consulting the source text, a correction is definitely necessary.

2. If you have to read a sentence twice to understand it correctly, a correction is needed. For example, if you need to read a sentence twice to see how it relates to what precedes, that means there is a problem of Smoothness. Or again, if a passage sounds nonsensical on first reading, but then you realize that the translator's wording could make sense after all, there is nevertheless a problem of Logic, for the future reader may at first make the same 'mistake' you did.

   This principle does not apply to certain texts which are by nature difficult to read: the extremely long sentences of English legal texts are very often hard to read; some passages in a scientific text may have a very complex argument which you may find hard to follow.

   Try as much as possible to read at normal reading speed in order to capture the future reader's experience. If the future reader will be reading aloud, then read the text aloud yourself.

3. Avoid perfectionism.
   As you go through the text, avoid asking yourself: *Can* I improve this? Of course you can, but that's not the question. The question is: Do I *need*

to improve it? Your aim is not to achieve a flawless text. Your client or employer cannot afford to have you revise, re-revise and re-re-revise. And there are diminishing returns on revision effort: your fifth re-reading will take almost as long as your first, but will probably reveal few if any errors. What you can do is guarantee that you will correct, free of charge, any mistakes the client finds. Your goal as a professional is to achieve acceptability – a text that meets needs. Perfection is a personal goal, not a business goal.

Achieving adequacy is no mean feat. Because there are so many things that can go wrong, and it is so hard to attend to all aspects of a text, it is in fact quite difficult to get everything adequate, and to do so from first page to last. This last point is very important. What is the use of a brilliant translation of the first three pages of a text if the last three are riddled with errors because you ran out of time?

So do not even *think* about an alternative wording until *after* you have decided that improvement is needed. And once you do so decide, use the first adequate alternative wording that comes to mind. Do not try to generate several useable alternatives and choose among them.

If in doubt about whether to make a change, don't agonize. Make no change and move on. Unless new research, or newly discovered evidence from elsewhere in the text, has revealed a definite error, any change you make while you are in an uncertain state of mind about its necessity is just as likely to make your translation worse as it is to make it better.

Remember: there are not just two degrees of quality – excellent and dreadful. There are many degrees of acceptable quality; it depends on the brief.

4. Don't retranslate! Don't retranslate! Don't retranslate!
Whenever possible, make small changes in the existing translation. Work with the wording that is already there. Don't restart the drafting process by working from the source text and inventing a whole new translation of a sentence. If a whole new translation does pop unbidden into your mind, ignore it, no matter how absolutely fabulous it may be. There is no reason to consider this new translation at all if the existing translation is acceptable as is, or with a small change.

Write 'do not retranslate' on a piece of paper and post it in front of you; recite it 100 times before going to bed; play a quiet recording of it while you sleep so that the idea enters your subconscious. A reviser who constantly retranslates is an economic burden on the organization and a cause of low morale among the translators whose work is being wasted.

There are of course occasions when, unfortunately, there is no choice but to retranslate some or even many passages of the text. First, the translator may simply be unqualified; the job should never have been assigned to them. Second, the translator was wrongly informed about the level of quality required (as discussed in Chapter 11.2): they were working to the "informative" level but should have been working to the "publishable" level. (The opposite case is far more common though: the translator was rightly working to the "informative" level, but you – perhaps not entirely consciously – are thinking of "publishable" as you revise.)

If you are working from your first language into your second, you may find it much easier to re-translate a sentence than to work with the existing wording. If you are self-revising into your second language, and come across a sentence you have doubts about, the quickest procedure may be to mentally paraphrase the corresponding sentence in the source text (which should be easy for you as a native speaker of the source language) and then prepare a whole new translation based on that re-wording.

5. Beware of introducing errors.
In the course of making changes to achieve Accuracy or Completeness, you may introduce Language errors. Conversely, as you make corrections pertaining to the Language parameters, you may introduce Transfer errors. In addition, one Language change may call for other Language changes elsewhere in the sentence, or in a preceding or following sentence, and it is easy to forget to make these additional changes.

Introducing Accuracy errors: As you re-arrange a sentence to achieve Smoothness, you may unwittingly remove an important bit of content, or unwittingly change the meaning (see example in Chapter 4.5). If at that point you have not yet done the comparative check for Accuracy and Completeness, there is no problem. But if you have already finished the comparative check, then you have done the worst thing a reviser can do: you have made the translation worse. If you discover that you do tend to introduce mistranslations, you may want to recheck Accuracy right after you re-arrange a sentence, or always do your Accuracy check last.

Introducing Language errors: Language errors tend to be introduced when you are focusing on one small segment of a sentence and you are not attending to the surrounding text. A very common error in English is to change a singular noun to a plural (or vice versa) and then forget to make corresponding number changes in words like 'this' and 'it' (which may be in the next sentence, referring back to the noun you have changed). Another type of error that results from parcelizing your attention is lack of euphony: you change 'took place' to 'occurred' in 'the exodus of Iraqi Kurds took place last week', and you fail to notice the uneuphonious and unintentionally humorous result 'Kurds occurred'.

You may also introduce a Language problem while correcting for Accuracy. For example you change 'implemented environmental management systems' to 'instituted environmental management systems'. Unfortunately, the sentence as a whole then reads '...instituted environmental management systems within penal institutions', with two occurrences of the root 'institut-' that have very different meanings. If you find you are making such mistakes, the solution is simple. After making a change, re-read the whole sentence, and possibly the next and previous sentences.

Deleting too many or too few words while correcting*:* With the advent of electronic writing in the 1980s, missing words became more common because it is so easy to press the key combination that deletes words once too often when you are removing a part of a sentence. Conversely, you may not press the delete keys often enough. Again, the solution is to re-read sentences after you delete portions of them.

6. Minimize corrections of features you are not currently checking.
   Suppose you are doing several checks, and currently you are checking Accuracy. You spot a Language problem and decide to correct it, thinking perhaps that you may not notice it later, during your unilingual check. Making such a change is harmless provided that you do not then get diverted by other Language problems, to the point where you find yourself tailoring and smoothing the sentence in question. This defeats the point of separate checks. Some people have no problem shifting mentally back and forth from accuracy-checking to language-checking, but others will find that they miss errors if they keep shifting the focus of their attention.

12.3 Order of operations

Below is an ideal but lengthy order of operations, for use when making corrections directly on screen rather than on paper (see Chapter 8.3). Such a procedure would be suitable with texts that will be used for many years, or for making important decisions. If you are self-revising rather than revising someone else's work, you may already have made some of these checks while drafting (see Chapter 13.1). If so, then you need to decide whether to recheck. It is also a good idea when self-revising to do an initial Spellcheck to remove annoying typographical errors. You don't want to be distracted by the temptation to correct these manually as you move through the text. (But don't forget to do another Spellcheck when you have completed all your revision work, in order to catch errors you introduced while revising!)

1. Read the entire translation for Logic, Smoothness, Tailoring, Sub-language and Idiomaticity, as well as those aspects of typography and punctuation which are important for meaning.
2. Do a comparative check for Accuracy and Completeness. If the client wants the translation to follow the Layout of the source text, check this at the same time.
3. Read the entire translation from start to finish for Mechanics (other than

spelling), Layout, consistency, and any Language errors introduced during steps 1 and 2.
4. Do a separate check for numbers if they are important to the message.
5. Check the document's Organization.
6. Run Spellcheck after all changes have been made in case you have introduced any errors.
7. Press Control-S to make sure you have saved all your changes.

Never forget step 7, which is important in *any* revision procedure, however brief. Before you print out a copy of the text, or send it off by e-mail to your client or to the translator, you must be sure that you are indeed printing or e-mailing the *final* version of your revision, *with all corrections included*. If you print from screen, you will be fine, but if you print or e-mail from the list of files on your hard drive, you will be printing or e-mailing the last version that you saved. The best practice is to save frequently. You may have set your computer to make a timed backup every so often, but if you don't actually press Control-S, then your final version, with all corrections included, will be in the backup file, not the main file.

Now very often (indeed, perhaps almost always, depending on your own situation), it will not be practical to carry out the lengthy procedure described above. Here is a selection of shorter procedures, beginning with the briefest:

A. Check the Presentation parameters. Also count paragraphs and lists of points to ensure there are no gross omissions. You may also want to pay special attention to correct reproduction of proper names, dates and other figures. With this procedure, you are essentially functioning as a proofreader.

B. Do a single reading of the translation for the CLP parameters. Look at the source text only if this is necessary to clear up a Logic problem.

C. Do a single comparative check. Don't stop for style changes (problems in Smoothing, Tailoring and Sub-language); correct only gross language errors if found, and run Spellcheck. Don't use this procedure if working into your second language; you have more need than native speakers to do a reading for Language only, so use (B) or (D).

D. Do two read-throughs – one unilingual and one comparative – in whichever order you think best.

12.4 Handling unsolved problems

Let's now consider the question: what do I do if the deadline is approaching, there is no time for further research, the author cannot be reached (or is simply unknown), and I have been unable to solve a problem? If creating the final version for delivery to the client is your job (not the original translator's), then it is your duty as a professional to admit that you have failed to find a solution. A professional is not someone who knows all the answers; a professional is someone who knows how to go about finding answers, but if they fail, they admit it.

Ask the client how the problems should be signalled: translator's notes incorporated into the body of the text? translator's footnotes? a separate page of notes? translator's notes in Comment boxes? question-marks or highlighting incorporated into the text? If the client will do more work on the text before it goes to a printer or to readers, then highlighting or Comments or a separate page of notes will often be acceptable. Similarly, if the text is being translated for information only (it will not be published), the client may be quite happy to have question-marks indicating uncertain passages. Otherwise you will need to prepare a finished version with translator's notes.

One difficulty with incorporating question-marks is that they may be misinterpreted by the reader. If a doctor reading my translation of a medical text comes across '?no foraminal encroachment?', he may think I am not certain whether there is such an expression as 'foraminal encroachment'. But that was not the problem. The problem was that I was not certain whether the source-text author was in fact saying that there was no foraminal encroachment. In such a case, you might use the Comment function to distinguish 'term uncertain' from 'meaning uncertain'.

Finally, remember that many clients do not want to spend a lot of time discussing problems in the translation. Clients who happen to be the author of the source text may be very happy – indeed anxious – to do so, but many others will want *you* to handle the problems.

Here are four common situations:

1. You understand the concept but can't find the right way to express it in the target language.

Write something which conveys the concept. Or take advantage of context: if the translator has referred to something called a 'blanky knife' and you cannot find any evidence for the existence of this term, perhaps you can write 'use an appropriate knife'. If the text is one where correct terminology is important, signal your problem to the client.

2. You can't decide which of two interpretations is right.

Fudge, that is, write something which has both meanings. This can often be accomplished through an ambiguous syntactic structure: a certain word order or punctuation device will allow the sentence to bear both meanings. If fudging is not possible, or the text is one where fudging is unacceptable, provide both possible translations. Here's an example using an incorporated translator's note:

> It is possible that helicopters will be used [*or perhaps*: use of helicopters is permitted] when ferrying heart-attack victims to the hospital.

3. You can't resolve a contradiction between different passages of the text.

If you are sure the contradiction is a genuine one (that is, it is not simply that you have failed to see the true meaning of one of the two passages), you must somehow indicate the problem. Otherwise, readers who know the text is a translation may wonder if the contradiction is due to the translator rather than to the source-text author.

4. You don't understand the passage at all.

One solution is to make an intelligent guess. Here's an example using question-marks:

> He said that ?boldness? was the secret to moving ahead.

When using question marks, it is best to use two marks: one at the outset of the uncertain passage and one at the end of it, to signal the extent of the problem to the reader. It may also be a good idea to italicize the question marks, or place them in square brackets, or highlight them in colour, in order to distinguish them from indicators of interrogative sentences.

Another possibility is to signal such problems with literal or unidiomatic translation:

> He said that the audacity of our abilities was the secret to moving ahead.

When you really do not understand a passage, literal or unidiomatic translation is actually better than smooth-reading, idiomatic translation, because you want to be sure that the reader recognizes the passage as a translation. Conceptual errors expressed in idiomatic language are more likely to be (wrongly) attributed to the source-text author than to the translator. However I hasten to add here that normally, revisers must wage unrelenting war on literal translation, by which I mean the substitution of bilingual dictionary equivalents. Translators, perhaps tired at the end of the day, sometimes stop attempting to figure out what the author of the source text meant, and start to engage in bilingual word substitution. This frequently happens when the source is very poorly written, or it is a transcript of spoken language. Word substitution cannot create a target-language equivalent, for speech or poor writing produced by native speakers of the target language does not sound anything like literal translation from another language.

Returning now to cases where all attempts to understand the source have failed, question marks and literal translation can be combined:

> He said that ?boldness? [*literally*: the audacity of our abilities] was the secret to moving ahead.

If question marks are unacceptable, use a suitably vague word suggested by context. Suppose you had to revise a translation of this passage:

> The strike sent a very strong message to the government that its workforce was becoming radicalized, with poignant implications for future relationships in the workplace.

Neither the translator nor you have been unable to determine what 'poignant' means here. So substitute an uncontroversial word (say 'significant') and translate.

Occasionally, if you are in doubt about the meaning of a passage, you can simply delete it from the draft translation. Sometimes it is obvious that a word or phrase is of no importance and could have been omitted from the source text. For example, if there is a parenthesis containing four examples of the author's point, and you can't understand the third one, omission will cause no harm. Another example: connector words can often be omitted if you cannot see how one sentence is related in meaning to the next; it may be better to leave it to the reader to fill in the connection rather than write something misleading.

If the obscure passage is a complicated description of a natural process or technological object, the solution may be to simply delete the description and refer the reader to an accompanying diagram or photograph.

If entire passages are obscure in their detail, but clear in overall intent, you can sometimes substitute a summary for the full translation which appears in the draft. This approach, along with omission and fudging, will be necessary if the brief is to produce a text whose status as a translation is to be concealed; in that case, obviously, no alternative translations or translator's notes will be possible.

12.5 Inputting changes

When corrections and improvements are made on paper, they have to be input on the computer. Two questions arise: who does this work and who is responsible for ensuring that it is done accurately? There is no point in painstaking revision work followed by sloppy inputting of changes.

With student trainees and new employees, the matter is clear. They input the changes, and then the supervising reviser checks that this has been done properly. One of the points to cover in evaluating trainees and new employees is how good they are at this task. Skipping over some of the handwritten changes is a not uncommon problem.

In other cases, changes may be input by the translator, the reviser (with contracted work), a proofreader or a member of the clerical support staff. In a large organization, a particular approach to this task may be laid down by senior or local managers; alternatively, it may be left up to teams of translators to decide on a system. The important thing is to have a definite system with clear-cut responsibilities.

The best system, if workable, is to have the translator input the changes (or Accept/Reject changes in a Track Changes display). That is because there is always a danger that the reviser, who is less familiar with the text, has unwittingly introduced errors.

12.6 Checking Presentation

Checking certain features of Presentation is especially important if your revision falls at the end of the production process; that is, after you input corrections, the text will not go to a proofreader, or a secretarial support unit or page layout designer within the translation department. Indeed, the client may use your output as such, printing it out for distribution, or placing a link to it on a Web page. Here are some common problems, expressed as questions:

- Are there any section headings isolated at the bottom of a page?
- Are there any widows (first line of a paragraph isolated at the bottom of a page) or orphans (last line isolated at the top of a page)? You may find that the widow/orphan protection option in your word processor does not in fact prevent widows and orphans.
- Are there any unintentionally blank or almost blank pages? (The translator may have unintentionally introduced a hard-page code that causes the next word to appear on a fresh page.)
- Are tables or columns skewed?
- Are some lines of point-form lists indented more than others or less than others?
- Are there pages where all words are bolded?
- Are the last few words of a footnote on the next page?
- Is the footnote indicator on the same page as the footnote?

You might also want to check the legibility of the text. Of course, clients and readers can manipulate e-text themselves to make it legible, but they may find the need to do so annoying, or worse, they may receive printouts of hard-to-read text rather than adjustable e-text. To make it easy for the reader's eye to follow the text, you should ensure that:

- It uses a serif font (serifs are fine lines finishing off the main strokes of letters).
- The font size is no smaller than 10 points.
- The lines are not too long.
  Long lines make it hard for the eye to keep its place and return to the next line. When producing landscape text (text parallel to the long side of the paper), use two or three columns in order to achieve shorter lines.
- The text is not full-justified (lined up with both left and right margins). Without added manipulation, full-justified text may have irregular spacing between words, and this is hard on the eyes. Check how your word processor handles justification; there may be no problem. If you do use full justification, make sure it is turned off for the last line of the paragraph; o t h e r w i s e   t h i s   w i l l   h a p p e n .

12.7 Preventing strategic errors

A considerable amount of correcting work can be eliminated if the translator avoids making strategic errors. A strategic error is a wrong decision about how to handle a certain category of translation problem. This decision then leads to multiple errors that cannot be quickly corrected with Find & Replace. For example, suppose a new translator is working on a lengthy text that contains large numbers of names of organizations, companies or committees in the source language. There are many ways such proper names can be handled, but it may be that some of them are not appropriate in the text at hand. It is therefore important to find out, at an early stage, how the translator is handling this issue. In the case of a contractor, you can send instructions about strategy along with the text, for example: "leave all organization names in the source language, italicize them, and where appropriate add a translation in brackets". Another scenario: suppose you are heading a team of translators working on a very lengthy text. You do not want a situation to arise where one translator regularly uses the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you' but another translator favours impersonal forms ('Earlier I suggested that you avoid rewriting' versus 'A suggestion was made earlier that rewriting should be avoided'). Once again, you need to decide early in the translation process how formal you want the writing to be and advise the translators accordingly.

12.8 Helping the reviser

If another translator will be checking your work, signal passages which you found especially difficult so that the reviser can concentrate on these if time is limited. If you have translated an expression in a way the reviser might find odd, write a note or use an agreed-upon mark to signal that in your view this is a good translation, despite its oddness. If you have obtained confirmation of a technical term, check-mark it so that the reviser does not need to recheck it.

It's also a good idea to check-mark confirmed terminology in long texts, so that when you come to self-revise, possibly a week later, you will know what you have already checked and what remains to be checked.

12.9 Procedures, time-saving and quality

In this book, there has frequently been occasion to distinguish things that are matters of rule-following from things that require judgment. Spelling is rule-governed, but tailoring a text to readers requires judgment. Now, when a reviser (or a translation service) creates a procedure, in the sense of a predetermined sequence of steps for checking translations, what happens is that rules replace judgment. If the procedure calls for just scanning a particular kind of text, or a job done by a senior translator, rather than giving it a fuller check, then one does not stop to consider what would be best in that particular case. If the text is of type x, or it has been done by translator y, then it is scanned because the approved procedure says so.

Generally speaking, it takes less time to follow a rule than to make a judgment and act on it. So every time you leave room for judgment, you increase production time. On the other hand, you probably also increase the number of errors caught. Thus in deciding what procedures to adopt, and how rigidly they will be applied, the time/quality trade-off discussed in Chapter 9.12 comes into play once more.

Summary of techniques for spotting errors

1. In self-revision, leave as much time as possible before starting the post-drafting phase.
2. In self-revision, change the appearance of the text on screen, or print it out, or read it aloud.
3. In comparative re-reading, read the translation before reading the corresponding bit of source text.
4. Have someone diagnose the kinds of things you miss. Read separately for these.
5. Do one reading with a macro-focus, one with a micro-focus.
6. To help focus on microlinguistic problems, read the text backward, starting at the last sentence.
7. Read draft translations on paper, not on screen. (See Chapter 8.3.)
8. After a stylistic change, check that you haven't changed the meaning.
9. After any linguistic change, check whether this calls for change elsewhere in the sentence or in the next (or previous) sentence.

Practice

1. Try to formulate the revision procedure you use. Does it vary with the type of text?
2. The term 'satisfice' (a combination of 'satisfy' and 'suffice') was coined by computer scientist Herbert Simon to refer to the act of doing what is good enough, what suffices while satisfying needs minimally; choosing the first solution that works rather than continuing to search for the best possible solution. Look the term up in Google, exploring its uses in various fields (economics, artificial intelligence, moral philosophy). In light of your reading, do you think that satisficing is a justifiable approach to revision?
3. In a workshop or course, divide up into groups and have each group take a different approach to revising the same draft translation. For example, one group might do a single check for Transfer and the CLP parameters, another group two or even three separate checks. Members of each group then exchange their revised versions with members of another group. Examine the translation you receive and compare it with your own revision. Discuss the results with other members of your group. Can you correlate procedure with types of error found or not found? Each group then makes a presentation on its conclusions to all course participants.

Further reading

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

Horguelin and Pharand (2009); Samuelsson-Brown (1996 and 2010, chapter 8.10).