

The Importance of Quality

Insights into Translation



Introduction

The quality of translation you require for basic business correspondence is not the same as the quality you require for a legal contract, technical document or medical report.

So how do you know what type of quality you need, and when quality can vary?

In conceptual terms, quality relates to how a product or service conforms to a given set of specifications. High quality would be required to meet rigorous and stringent requirements, while lower quality would satisfy less stringent requirements.

Quality in the translation industry is comprised of four critical components: resource selection, quality assurance processes, technologies and industry certifications. Understanding the important factors in each area, will help you become a better translation buyer.

This document was written to help you understand how quality is achieved at different levels and why receiving the appropriate level of quality is always important.



Components of Quality

RESOURCE SELECTION

The first step in a successful translation is helping the Translation Service Provider (“TSP”) understand your needs, after which they will begin the resource selection process. To understand your needs, a professional TSP uses coordinators who will gather all of your project requirements:

- Source and target language(s)
- Locale (i.e. French for usage in Canada? France? Switzerland? etc.)
- Information about importance and intended use of the material(s)
- Delivery requirements
- Reference materials to maintain consistency

The TSP will examine the above details and draw upon a deep pool of linguistic resources covering all domains and industries. It is imperative that a TSP be highly competent at evaluating linguists to determine which ones are consistently providing the best quality work within the prescribed timelines.

Professional translators typically have:

All linguists are qualified professionals who are subject to ongoing evaluations and have one or more of the following attributes:

- Passed internal translation tests during recruitment;
- An undergraduate degree or higher education in translation or a related field;
- A professional designation as a Certified Translator;
- A minimum of 5 years experience in the translation industry.

Translator selection is based upon relevant domain expertise, locale and performance history.



QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

As mentioned, there are varying levels of quality that can be specified to meet more/less stringent requirements. Quality-oriented TSPs focus on the top three quality levels and follows a standardized quality assurance process for each of the three.

Quality level	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3
<u>Top Class</u> Highly stringent requirements e.g. medical, legal, technical documents	Translation, revision and proofreading by qualified translator with industry-specific knowledge	Revision and proofreading by second independent native-speaker with industry-specific knowledge	Review by a domain specialist ensuring target text has been properly translated for intended target audience
<u>Commercial Grade</u> Stringent requirements e.g. marketing, packaging	Translation, revision and proofreading by qualified translator with industry-specific knowledge	Revision and proofreading by second independent native-speaker	Not included
<u>General Usage</u> Minimal stringent requirements e.g. letters, business correspondence	Translation, revision and proofreading by qualified translator	Revision and proofreading, ensuring correct formatting of text and images	Not included
<u>Basic Quality</u> No stringency	Translation, revision and proofreading by qualified translator	Not included	Not included
<u>Machine Translation</u> Computer translation to understand small phrases	Post-editing of machine generated translation to help it flow	Not included	Not included



Translation tools for every level of quality

Experienced TSPs understand if and when to leverage the appropriate translation technology. Translation memory recognizes how human translators have previously translated similar content, and prompts them to maintain consistent terminology. Generally, style guide creation, terminology extraction, and construction of a single centralized term base and translation memory should be expected.

Customer satisfaction measurement

Professional TSPs formally measure their customer satisfaction levels using internal data (% of projects delivered on time) and client feedback (% of complaints regarding the translation itself, or related to customer service). Most often, client feedback is received on an ad hoc basis over the phone and from structured e-mail-based surveys.

Escalation process

When translation errors or service issues arise, there should be a formal process in place to resolve issues and ensure that they are not repeated.



INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS

The development of TSP certifications is the result of industry growth and maturation. Certifications are a quick way to identify whether or not a particular TSP meets certain standards and has demonstrated compliance by virtue of the certification. The two key translation industry certifications you should be aware of are explained below and were developed by service providers, clients and general interest participants, all working together to establish standards which are independently audited to establish compliance.

Canadian General Standards Board CAN/CGSB-131.10-2017

Developed under the auspices of the Canadian General Standards Board and approved by the Standards Council of Canada, this certification establishes and defines the process requirements for the provision of translation services. It harmonizes, where possible, with the provisions of EN-15038 and was strongly advocated for by l'Association de l'industrie de la langue/Language Industry Association (AILIA).

ISO 17100:2015 Standard for Translation Services

ISO 17100:2015 – provides requirements for core processes, resources and other aspects necessary for the delivery of a quality translation service that meets applicable specifications.

This standard encompasses the core translation process and all other related aspects involved in providing the service, including quality assurance and traceability. This standard offers both TSPs and their clients a description and definition of the entire service.



THE IMPACT OF SPEED

Speed affects quality, consistency and cost. As a rule of thumb, excluding technology benefits, a professional translator translates approximately 1,500 – 2,000 words per day depending on the complexity of the material, source file format, reference materials and the time required to research new terms.

Translators who frequently work on your texts will have built a translation memory that remembers how he/she previously translated your text, and improves production levels proportionately based on the level of similarity between projects.

Humans are not engines that enable you to step on the gas and generate more revolutions per minutes. To achieve quality, linguists need to be given sufficient time to achieve a translation with a minimal number of errors.

What if you need your translation project turned around in a rush?

To maximize consistency, it is recommended that a project be translated by the same set of linguists, one to translate and one to revise. In a rush situation, multiple translators can be assigned, but you should expect some degree of inconsistency. Prior to the start of a multi-team initiative, it is good idea to tell the TSP which sections should be handled by each team.

Summary

1. There are higher/lower levels of quality to match more/less stringent requirements.
2. Resource selection is critical.
3. Translation technology can help to improve consistency and delivery timelines.
4. A quality-oriented TSP will formally measure and share their customer satisfaction levels.
5. Industry certifications are a quick way to identify a TSP's compliance with certain standards.
6. Speed affects quality, consistency and cost.

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