

Revision collision

Revision can mean many different things to different people. Karen Andrews and Angie Taylor gather four different industry perspectives on the process



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Angie Taylor is a French to English translator with a background in international business and specialising in tourism & travel, arts & culture, postal services and alternative therapies.

The subject of revisions is a frequent bone of contention within the translation community. Speaking at the 2015 AsLing Conference, Jaap van de Meer of the Translation Automation User Society (TAUS) said 50 per cent of the translation budget is now spent on translation review. It is an important part of the translation process. Here, experienced professionals from both translation companies and the freelance side give their views on the main issues, and offer their best tips on how to handle the quality assurance process.

All our professionals stress the importance of understanding client expectations. This can mean applying quality standards that are not the same as our own. The expected standards may appear to be lower than our own aspirations. This aligns with the definition of translation quality given by Alan Melby at the AsLing Conference: a quality translation demonstrates the accuracy and fluency required for the audience and purpose, and complies with all other specifications negotiated between the requester and provider, taking into account both requester goals and end-user needs. If the client is happy, we have met the required quality standards.

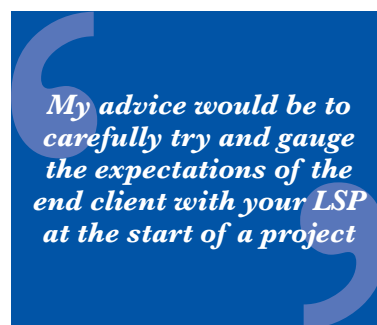
The language service provider



Françoise Bajon is president of the European Language Industry Association (ELIA), owner of the French localisation company Version Internationale and a member of the editorial board of the

Language Industry Web Platform (LIND-Web).

The quality levels of the language service provider (LSP) are set by the end client. There are three types of client: demanding clients with a high level of localisation maturity who have a formal approval process to check the quality delivered against their expectations; clients who simply want their message in a foreign language (increasingly rare); and clients in the middle ground, who require a lot more time and hand-holding. They have high quality expectations, but unfortunately, they do not always



have the resources and processes to handle revisions correctly and fairly.

The third client type may be a non-native speaker with a good command of the target language, such as an English-speaking marketing manager. Otherwise, clients have to rely on their foreign subsidiaries or partners. The latter may request a complete rewrite in their jargon as translation is outside their area of expertise. The quality expected from a freelancer is directly connected to the above considerations. LSPs with sophisticated clients expect top-notch quality from freelancers. The quality

assurance process may be dropped for less demanding clients.

Client acquisition costs are rising. The time and effort needed to land a first job from a major or medium-sized company have dramatically increased. All the phases of presentation, meetings with the different stakeholders at the client company, negotiations and initial tests constitute an ever-increasing investment. As a result, LSPs need to invest more in client retention too.

To add value, LSPs need to perform quality assurance on freelancers' work. The checks performed must reflect the end client's expectations. Some errors are unacceptable from a professional translator, such as spelling and grammar mistakes. Style and tone are a more delicate issue. Personal preferences should never be considered as errors. Stylistic revisions can offer useful improvements and lead to stronger, punchier copy.

My advice would be to carefully try and gauge the expectations of the end client with your LSP at the start of a project. You need to allow sufficient time to meet these expectations. If you get unexpected negative feedback, discuss with the LSP how to approach things differently for the next translation.

Quality in translation is a process. It requires constant adjustments, and sometimes more major updates. Bear in mind that the end client's various stakeholders may not be looking for the same quality output. In the end, it all boils down to the importance of understanding your client's expectations.

The university lecturer



Lindsay Bywood is a senior lecturer at the University of Westminster and is currently studying for a PhD in film subtitling at University College London. She is a former project manager at Voice & Script International and a frequent contributor to the ITI London Regional Group's annual 'Meet the Client' events. The primary issue is to understand and apply the standard requested by the client. As trained professionals, we find it hard to

deliver copy that falls below our aspired quality level. But we have to respect what our client wants and is prepared to pay for.

It is important to know the text's purpose. This can be difficult to ascertain if we are at the end of a long chain of translation companies and clients. My top tip is to print out your work and review it on paper. It is important to handle at least one set of revisions this way. It makes it easier to find mistakes.

When you are revising your own work, it is advisable to leave some time between completing your translation and checking it. I emphasise to my students that reviewing is a different skill from translating. Not everyone is good at revising, or even likes it. Obviously, checking your own work is vital. However, you should avoid taking on review work if you do not like it or are not good at it.

There is an additional layer to subtitling revisions. You need to check that the translation is correct in context (ie with the visuals), but also that it is correct for grammar, sense, style, register and punctuation. Subtitles cannot be revised without the corresponding video, although sometimes clients request this. I think that the key to avoiding issues is to clarify expectations in advance and confirm your understanding in writing.

The specialist freelancer



Kari Koonin is a freelance translator working from Dutch and German into English in the agricultural, horticultural and food industry.

One of the main issues for translators is getting enough distance between yourself and your translation to spot any errors and judge the quality of your work. Other issues include being aware of your client's requirements, remembering to double-check that you have adhered to any special instructions, etc. It's essential to plan in enough time to revise your translation thoroughly. When revising other translators' work, I usually reckon on checking around

1,000 words an hour, so that is a useful starting point.

I revise my own work using a text-to-speech application. I find this a far easier way of identifying those little errors that the eye can easily skim over, and it also helps me to hear whether a piece flows. This is also a much more accurate way of checking numbers: having them read out immediately enables you to identify mistakes.

I always revise my work twice: once for spotting translation or other errors, omissions, etc, and once for the final stylistic polish. And sometimes a third run-through for a particularly sensitive or difficult text. Quality assurance functions in CAT tools are becoming more and more advanced and have done a huge amount to help translators. They do everything from flagging up inconsistent terms and translations to spotting double spaces.

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Read your translation out loud to yourself. You'll be surprised what a difference it makes to hear your words spoken – even in your own voice. I also advise newcomers that the more experienced they become, the closer they will be able to get their first draft to the final version. That way, the revision process will mainly be concerned with aspects such as omissions, punctuation, text flow, etc, and less on fundamental aspects such as meaning, interpretation, terminology research, etc. This is a much more efficient way of working.

Some clients may use different style guides or different conventions. It is important to apply the same high standards to every client and every text. It is always worthwhile establishing aspects such as preferred spellings (-ize or -ise?) and other conventions up front so that you

know what the client/agency expects. Sometimes the translator has to take the initiative.

The creative freelancer



Alison Hughes is a freelance translator working from French to English for the creative industries.

If the translation is not too long, I print it out and annotate the printed document before starting to make changes in Word. I prefer to do this because I may discover further down the document that something I changed earlier on is in fact fine in the context. Once I start using Track Changes it muddles my mind, so I always create a new document with the changes saved and read it through before I deliver.

One of the main challenges is the agency model where translators return their translations to be proofread and don't see the final version unless the proofreader comes across a terrible translation. When a translator does see the changes made, either because of issues or because that is how a particular agency operates, they jump on the defensive.

Some agencies and clients have good native speakers in-house and I either don't hear about the translation again or we can have a constructive dialogue about anything they feel isn't quite right. I translate creative texts and the end client once felt I had moved too far from the source. It took a simple exchange of emails to find the right solution.

I've started working for more direct clients and try to systematically build a revision option into my quotes. The biggest change is I am no longer nervous about having my work checked by a fellow translator and actually find it can be a real confidence booster. In return, checking the work of another good translator is a great learning experience.

I attended a revision workshop given by the late Sue Young, who told us to 'change as little as possible'. It's a simple concept but it does make me question every change and stops me slipping into the trap of subjective changes. ©