

## TRANSLATION NORMS AND QUALITY CONTROL OF A TRANSLATION

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### Annotation

Norms refers to behaviour and attitudes which are considered normal, while values are those things that people consider important to them. Norms are believed to specify what is tolerated and allowed in a certain behavioural dimension, ensure the retention of social order and are acquired by each person during his or her socialisation. This is why translation involves at least two sets of norm-systems when it concerns at least two languages.

### Annotatsiya

Normlar normaga mos kelmaydigan xatti-harakatlar va munosabatlarni anglatadi, qadriyatlar esa odamlar o'zlari uchun muhim deb hisoblaydigan narsalardir. Normlar hududiy xulq-atvor ta'siri doirasida nima ruxsat etilgan va nima ruxsat etilganligini belgilaydi, qat'iy tartibni saqlashni qo'llab-quvvatlaydi va har bir shaxsning ijtimoiylashuvi uchun yordam beradi. Shuning uchun tarjima kamida ikkita tilga tegishli bo'lsa, kamida ikkita me'yorlar tizimini o'z ichiga oladi.

### Аннотация

Нормы относятся к поведению и отношениям, которые считаются нормальными, в то время как ценности – это те вещи, которые люди считают важными для себя. Считается, что нормы определяют, что терпимо и разрешено в определенном поведенческом измерении, обеспечивают сохранение социального порядка и усваиваются каждым человеком в течение его социализация. Вот почему перевод включает в себя как минимум два набора норм-систем, когда он касается как минимум двух языков.

The notion of 'norms' in reference to translation is considered to have been first introduced by the Israeli scholar Gideon Toury in the late 1970s. This term refers to regularities of translation behavior within a specific sociocultural situation.<sup>276</sup>

Before the 1970s, translations were evaluated mostly in their comparison with the source text. Toury's works have shifted attention away from the relationship between individual source and target texts and towards the relationship which exists among the target texts themselves in the context of literary production.

Toury's concept consists of three levels of speaking about a text: **competence**, **norms** and **performance**. Competence is the level of description which allows theorists to list the inventory of options that are available to translators in a given context, that is, a description of what means a translator can use to achieve a goal. To make a good end-text, a translator must be competent in the language reserves s/he can select from. Performance concerns the subset of options the translator actually selects in translation, i. e., what is in fact employed by a translator and how it is employed. Norms are options that translators in a given socio-historical context select on a regular basis, that is, what is typical to use in a particular context.

A number of scholars have attempted to explore some of the theoretical aspects of the notion of norms. Many articles on translation norms have been published in *Target*, the international journal edited by Toury and published since 1989 by John Benjamins.

In their investigation, the theorists came to distinguish between **norms** and **conventions**. Norms are binding, and obligatory, whereas conventions only express preferences.

Norms are divided into **constitutive** and **regulatory**. Constitutive norms concern what is or is not accepted as translation. For example, poetry translation does not admit word-for-word translation. Regulatory norms concern what kind of equivalence a translator opts for or achieves. For instance, in poetry translation the functional level of equivalence is obligatory, but the lexical and grammatical similarity of the source and target texts is hardly achieved at all.

Further, Chesterman grouped the norms into **professional** and **expectancy** norms.<sup>277</sup> Professional norms emerge from competent professional behavior and govern the accepted methods and strategies of the translation process. They are sub-divided into three major types:

- **Accountability** norms, which involve ethics and call for professional standards of integrity and thoroughness;
- **Communication** norms, which are social and emphasize the role of the translator as a communication expert;
- **Relation** norms, which are linguistic and require the translator to establish and maintain an appropriate relation between source and target texts.

Expectancy norms are established by the translation receivers' expectations of what a translation should be like. In attempting to conform to the expectancy norms operating in a given community, a translator will simultaneously be conforming to the professional norms of that community.

V. Komissarov described translation norms from a linguistic point of view.<sup>278</sup> He classified the norms into translation **equivalence** norms, **genre and style** norms, **language** norms, **pragmatic** norms, and **conventional** norms.

Translation equivalence norms require as nearly as possible a common sense of the source and target text. When the sense in the target text is transgressed, equivalence norms are completely broken, and the translation is considered unsatisfactory. If a translation is made at a low level of equivalence, the norms are relatively broken, and the translation is regarded as acceptable.

Genre and style norms presuppose the correct selection of a text's predominant function and the preservation of stylistic peculiarities in translation. For example, when translating a scientific or technical text, a translator keeps in mind that the informative, but not expressive function, must prevail, which makes him reduce the expressiveness of the Russian science text as compared with its English original.

Language norms mean the correct usage of language in speech (errorless combinability, agreement of words, selection of words, etc.) It is common knowledge that the norms of the source and target language can be different, and a fledging translator, 'hypnotized' by the source language norms, sometimes violates the natural flow of the target language text. For example, one text about cowboys' life included

the following sentence: *...the exciting chases on horseback with guns blazing, the handsome guitar-strumming cowboys around bonfires and the lovely saloon ladies all made exciting viewing.* A student translator did not think much about the grammar links and meanings of some words and his translation was *\*захватывающие погони на лошадях со стреляющими пистолетами, красивые ковбои, играющие на гитарах, сидя у костра, милые леди салонов – все это при водило в восхищение.* This translation is, no doubt, far from exciting.

Pragmatic norms require that a translator realize, first and foremost, the pragmatic purpose of the text; the author's intent must be very close to the communicative effect on the translation receptor. Sometimes the fulfillment of the pragmatic aim may transgress other translation norms, a language norm in particular. A short by John Lennon and its translation by the graduates of the English department (FESU) Maria Boiko and Marianna Karp can illustrate the point. Lennon's short continues a series of literary parodies on absurd literature, so it is based on agrammatical forms, puns, and nuisance language coinages, which, nevertheless, produce a definite impact on the reader. How this author's intent is reflected in translation can be seen in comparing the source and the target texts:

*Nicely Nicely Clive*

*To Clive Barrow it was just an ordinary day nothing unusual or starnge about it, everything quite navel, nothing outstanley, just another day but to Roger it was somthing special, a day amongst days ... a red lettuce day ... because Roger was getting married and as he dressed that morning he thought about the gay batchelor soups he'd had with all his pals. And Clive said nothing. To Roger everything was different, wasn't this the day his Mother had told him about, in his best suit and all that, grimming and shakeing hands, people tying boots and ricebudda on his car.*

*To have and to harm ... till death duty part ... he knew it all off by hertz. Clive Barrow seemed oblivious. Roger could visualise Anne in her flowing weddy drag, being wheeled up the aisle, smiling a blessing. He had butterflied in his stomarce as he fastened his bough tie and brushed his hairs. "I hope I'm doing the right thing" he thought looking in the mirror, "Am I good enough for her?" Roger need not have worried because he was "Should I have flowers all round the spokes" said Anne polishing her foot rest. "Or should I keep it syble?" she continued looking down on her grain haired Mother.*

*"Does it really matter?" repaid her Mother wearily wiping her sign. "He won't be looking at your spokes anyway." Anne smiled the smile of someone who's seen a few laughs.*

*Then luckily Annes father came home from sea and cancelled the husband.*

Conventional norms are the translation requirements in a certain historical context. The classicist norms of translation required an 'ideal' translation with embellishments and decorations. In the period of sentimentalism, a thread of the translator's life experience as well as his feelings was reflected in translation. These conventions led to free translations. The convention norms to date regard the translation as a substitute of the original text, which requires the maximal similarity of the source and target texts

Quality control of the translation

Quality control ensures that the translated content is delivered within the agreed-upon timelines and budgets and meets the project's specific needs, such as word count, formatting, and style guidelines. This helps businesses to maintain project efficiency, meet deadlines, and avoid costly rework or delays.

Translational norms are a function of the environment where the translation is undertaken, which is usually the target culture environment. Toury takes his definition of norm from sociology. He defines a norm in the following way: the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community - as to.

Quality control of the translation must be done by the translator, first and foremost, and can be done by an editor, either a hired editor or the translator's colleague.

Giving advice to translators, an experienced British professional translator Geoffrey Samuelsson-Brown suggests the following steps for quality control:<sup>279</sup>

- Resolve any queries that you may have with a subject expert or the client. It is not infrequent that the quality of the translation is governed by the quality of the source text.

- Check to ensure that the entire text has been translated - you could easily have been interrupted for a number of reasons and missed some part of the text.

- Check all figures and dates in the text and in tables.

- Carry out a spell check using your word processor program and grammar check if available.

- In every case proofread your translation. If possible, set your translation aside for as long as possible when you have completed the first draft. Read your text as an original text and not as a translation.

- Pass the translation to a colleague for checking in order to get a more objective view of the translation.

- Discuss any corrections with the proof-reader, where required. Incorporate the corrections and changes where these are relevant. Repeat the spell check to ensure that the corrections and changes do not contain typing errors.

In evaluating a translation, proof-readers usually mark four types of mistake: distortions, inaccuracies, stylistic drawbacks, and solecisms.

Distortion is a blunder marring the sense of the original by describing another situation and, thus, misinforming a receptor. Distortions generally occur because of the translator's misunderstanding of the text, poor language knowledge, and insufficient background awareness. The often repeated example of machine translation of the biblical text can illustrate the point: *The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak* translated as *Спирт хорош, а мясо протухло*.

Inaccuracy occurs when a translator mistranslates some detail of the text. Inaccuracies result from misunderstanding a word or a structure. For example, the time of the situation is incorrectly conveyed in the translation of the sentence: *Говорят, эта церковь была построена в 14 веке.* – \**This church is said to be built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.* The wrong form of the infinitive is the cause of the inaccuracy. Or another example, cited by Nora Gal: the source text tell of an old woman who wants to buy a dog and explains her desire this way: *I want something human.*– *Хочу, чтоб рядом было что-то человеческое.* This translation sounds somewhat

unnatural in Russian; it would be much better *Хочу, чтобы рядом была живая душа.*<sup>280</sup>

Stylistic drawback is a deviation from target language stylistic and semantic norms. Often, this fallacy is due to underestimating translation transformations: e.g., *It's high noon. The sun beats down on the dusty, deserted main street of Dodge City.* - \* *Полдень. Солнце бьет по пыльной пустой улице Додж-Сити.* \* *Солнце палит на безлюдную улицу города Додж-Сити.* The translation would be more natural if the student translators used partitioning of the sentence and found another equivalent to the verb: *Город Додж-Сити. Главная улица пустынна. Стоящее в зените солнце жжет нещадно.*

Solecism is a syntactical error resulting from breaking structural norms of the target language because of the translator's illiteracy or because of source language interference. Another citation from Nora Gal's experience: *И никто не увидит нас вернувшись обратно.* Evidently, the translator meant *Никто нас больше не увидит. (Мы не вернемся обратно.)*

If a translated text is meant to be published, the translator is sure to deal with an editor, the central figure in the publishing industry. Some experienced translators become eventually editors of publishing companies (Nora Gal, Ivan Kashkin<sup>281</sup> and others).

Generally, the editor's tasks are as follows:

- arranging creative and publishing work;
- checking the translation;
- consulting the translator;
- in some countries, the editor's tasks include recommending titles (authors and books), appealing to them, for publishing.

The editor is a conductor of the publishing house strategies. S/he oversees that the translated text meet all the proper norms and requirements. One of the exemplary editors of the time was Alexandre Blok who required that translators show the author's individual style in the natural flow of the target discourse.<sup>282</sup>

To perform his/her role successfully, the editor must be very competent, even more experienced than a translator. It is desirable that the editor know two languages (unfortunately, sometimes publishing companies have only monolingual editors, editing translations haphazardly). Normally, editors check translations into their native tongue, in which stylistic, semantic and syntactic resources they are completely proficient.

An intelligent, patient and benevolent editor is a real help and mentor to a translator. The editor has the right to insist on emending the text, but it is the translator who is responsible for the target text, not the editor. The translator, after all, comes to a consensus with the editor, or rejects his comment. It is as illegal for a translator to emendate by him/herself the text, already checked by the editor, as for an editor to alter the target text without the translator's consent.

It is essential that a translator understand proofreading (editing) marks, which follow national standards and are marked both in text and in margin. The most important of them are as follows:

- leave unchanged (both in English and Russian): \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ under characters to remain unchanged;
- refer to translator if anything is of doubtful accuracy: encircled question mark or word;
- insertion: ^in English, and√in Russian;

Whatever the specifications for your bridge, you must never forget the one secret ingredient that will prevent it from falling down: quality. As a beginning translator, always keep in mind your translation will be carefully read and evaluated by the reviewer and the end client. Delivering a high-quality translation will enable the reviewer to:

- Deliver a high-quality translation to the end client.
- Give positive feedback to the translator.
- Improve his/her own translation skills.
- Meet his/her own deadlines without scrambling to beat the clock.

On the other hand, low-quality translation leads only to frustration. When faced with a translation that is substandard, the reviewer is forced to set aside the task of reviewing for that of re-translation, under much tighter deadlines than the translator had in the first place, to prevent the bridge from falling.

The practical methodology that follows is a 7-step process designed to help beginning translators build a strong and aesthetically pleasing bridge under solid, rigorous quality control. Each step has a series of quiz questions, for a total of 40 questions. If you can complete the quiz answering “yes” to all 40 questions, you will be able to deliver top-quality work. While the methodology may not apply seamlessly to all situations without exception, it should at least give you some ideas for building your own quality control procedure for delivering top-notch translations.

### **1. Accepting a Translation Request**

*Here is your opportunity to determine whether you can comfortably take on the project or not. If you can say “Yes” to the questions below, you can accept the project. If any doubts or concerns arise, don’t be afraid to talk to your project manager about them. This sends a message to the PM that you are geared towards producing quality work.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1) Do you have access to the source material?</b></p>                                  | <p><i>Never accept a request “blind” without first seeing the source text.</i></p>   |
| <p><b>2) Do you truly understand the subject matter of the source material?</b></p>          | <p><i>Be brutally honest with yourself. It is impossible to render a correct translation without a complete understanding of the subject matter.</i></p> |
| <p><b>3) Do you have the right resources (bilingual dictionaries, terminology lists,</b></p> | <p><i>Make sure you have the right paper/electronic tools for building your translation and expressing</i></p>   |

papers, books...) to translate the source material, or do you know which client website(s) or forums you can go to in order to find the information you need?

**4) Do you have the style manuals you need in your target language?**

*A mastery of your target language is a must.*

**5) Do you master the software tools you need to deliver your project?**

*If you feel you are struggling with a software program, e.g., a CAT tool or a word processor, invest a little bit of your time every day toward mastering it.*

**6) Do you know the country/countries in which the translation will be published?**

*If your client asks you to translate from English into French, is the translation for Belgium? France? Canada? Do you feel confident writing for those countries?*

**7) Do you know the purpose of the translation?**

*Knowing the purpose of the translation will help you figure out which register you should use. Ask your project manager/direct client for any in-house reference files that can help you better understand your client's preferences. In addition to industry terminology, plenty of companies in each industry use their proprietary terminology.*

## **2. Your First Draft**

*Here is where you dig deeper to achieve a thorough understanding of your source text.*

**8) Do you follow the client's instructions?**

*Did the client ask to use a specific formatting style or template? Always follow the client's instructions. Communicate with them if you have any doubts.*

**If the source file is in .PDF format, did you ask your project manager if you could run it through PDF to Word conversion software?**

*Special care is needed here: scanned files can require a lot of post-processing to produce an editable file you can work with and deliver to the client as a quality end product. It is sometimes advisable to translate from scratch in a word processor.*

**If you use a CAT tool, are you constantly referring to your original source file?**

*Sometimes, the order of the segments in a CAT tool file can be misleading. Always check the original source language file to make sure you properly understand the text structure.*

**Do you read each sentence of the source text before you translate it?**

*Even when you are pressed for time, read each sentence completely before you translate it. The text will sound natural in your native language and will not follow the conventions of the source language. This will save you time during the review process.*

**Are you using common sense?**

*For example, if you are translating “engine specifications” into French, do you know whether the author is referring to one single engine or several of them? Sometimes, you can find out with a bit of research. At other times, you can only know the answer by asking your client.*

**If you encountered any ambiguous items, did you clearly identify them and ask your project manager about them?**

*Research any concept you are unsure about and don't be afraid to ask your project manager any questions you might still have: e.g., do you understand all the abbreviations in your source text?*

**Are you abiding by all the conventions used in your native language?**

*For example, to indicate a monetary amount, English requires that you write the currency symbol*



*first, followed by the amount. Find out what the experts in your native language do: how do they represent amounts?*

**15) Did you take extra care to write all proper nouns and numbers correctly?**

*Use your copy/paste functions for proper nouns and numbers if you can. For example, if you translate a document for a major bank like UBS, you could easily misspell it as “USB.” Your spellchecker will not catch that mistake, but chances are UBS will...*

**16) If the source text contains a quote, did you check if the quote exists in the target language?**

*If you translate a quote from a piece of EU legislation, for example, look for the corresponding official translation of that quote in your target language.*

### **3. Your First Bilingual Review**

*If the deadline allows, always perform your first review the day after you have finished your draft version.*

**17) Did you translate everything?**

*We are not robots: always check for missing words, sentences or sections.*

**18) Can you understand everything you wrote?**

*If you have to read a phrase or sentence twice to understand what you wrote, this may be an indication you need to rework it.*

**19) Do you have the correct register?**

*Take this opportunity to check your register.*

**20) Are your headings correct?**

*Headings can be tricky to translate. Now that you have a complete understanding of your source text, always take a critical look at all translated headings in the document to make sure your rendering is relevant in each case.*

21) **Did you correct any obvious mistakes?**

*Now is your chance to catch any obvious or glaring errors. If you've been able to postpone your review for the following day, they should jump out at you.*

22) **Did you pay attention to false cognates?**

*E.g. "library" (English) and "librairie" (French).*

23) **Did you follow all standard conventions in your mother tongue?**

*For example, what are the conventions for writing a list in your target language, or for executing quotation marks, or for comma, period, colon and semicolon placement with respect to closing quotation marks?*

24) **Did you pay attention to the text layout and fonts?**

*Make sure you reproduce the original layout and formatting, including but not limited to fonts, font colors, point size, highlighting, boldface and italics, as closely as possible. Again, if you use a CAT tool, referring to your original text will help you quickly find any special formatting that you need to reproduce.*

#### **4. Your Second Bilingual Review**

*You have really mastered your subject by now. This is your last chance to check for complete accuracy between the source and target texts and make sure you have followed all the client's instructions. While performing a complete bilingual review, focus on the next items.*

25) **Did you correct any minor translation errors or omissions?**

*You are now mastering your source text. Here is your chance to focus on the details.*

26) **Did you check for consistent use of terminology?**

*If you work with a CAT tool, use whichever consistency checker is built into the system. You can use the automatic search function (Ctrl + F keys in Windows or cmd + F in Mac OS) to identify any needed changes.*

**If you are working with a  
27) CAT tool, did you use its  
integrated consistency checker?**

*Always use all of the utilities  
and checkers in the software that  
will allow you to spot any mistake  
you haven't caught before.*

**28) Did you run an automatic  
spell check?**

*Run a spell check in your CAT  
tool. If its spelling checker is poor,  
copy/paste your text into another  
application that can check your  
spelling and run a spell check in  
that software.*

**Last but not least, did you  
29) check whether your translation  
contains double spaces?**

*Use your automatic search-  
and-replace function and replace  
double spaces with single spaces  
where they are inappropriate..*

## **5. Your First Monolingual Review**

*Here is your opportunity to put yourself in your audience's shoes and read your translation as if it had been written in your target language in the first place. While reading your translation, focus on the next few items.*

**If you used a CAT tool,  
30) did you preview  
your translation in the original  
file format?**

*Make sure all text of the target  
file is displayed in a legible form  
for your end client.*

**31) Does your translation  
sound like it was written  
in your native language in the  
first place?**

*Here is your chance to check  
you have written your translation  
the way a native speaker would  
have expressed it. If you are "out  
like a light" after reading your  
translation, chances are your  
audience will be too...*

**With respect to pronouns,  
32) can the reader clearly identify  
what they refer to?**

*Always check for consistency  
and flow from one sentence to the  
next, and from one paragraph to  
the next.*

**Is your register  
33) appropriate for the type of  
document you are translating?**

*You may have to either stick to  
the source text (e.g. legal texts) or  
brighten your style and play with  
the way you start your sentences  
and paragraphs (e.g. marketing  
content).*

## 6. Your Second Monolingual Review

Here is your opportunity to catch any last-minute details.

**34) Did you print out your translation and read it from the print copy?**

*Nowadays, most people scan texts from a computer monitor, tablet, or smart phone. Reviewing a print copy of your translation is an experiment I recommend to every translator.*

**35) Did you read every word of your translation?**

*Take your time...pretend you're a sloth if you need to. Read every single word of your text to make sure you did not forget to write conjunctions such as "and," or forget to insert a critical comma or delete an unnecessary apostrophe somewhere.*

**36) Did you pay extra attention to grammar?**

*In my experience, many grammatical mistakes are not detected by automatic spellcheckers. You must read every single character of the translation to find these mistakes.*

**37) Did you pay extra care to homophones ("sound-alikes")?**

*Spell checkers don't catch improper substitutions of "their" for "they're," "women" for "woman," etc.*

**38) Did you use consistent punctuation and capitalization?**

*Checking these items in a printout of your translation makes all the difference. Your eye will catch these types of mistakes more quickly than on a screen.*

## 7. Delivery of your Translation

Here is your last opportunity to advise your project manager with any special instructions for the reviewer/end client.

**39) Did you clearly indicate any unresolved items or translation decisions to your project manager so that the reviewer/direct client is made**

*If any concerns remain when it's time to deliver the project, let the reviewer know about these items so he/she can pay extra attention to them.*

aware of them?

**If your project is very  
40)specific, did you indicate your  
research work to the reviewer?**

*Submitting your sources to the  
reviewer will show you took the  
time to fully understand the source  
text and choose the right target  
terminology.*

When working with professional translation companies you can be sure that your translations are vetted from top to bottom. Quality control is inherent in the process. There are many levels and people on your team that work to make sure that your final product is the optimal translation for your needs. There is literally an entire team giving input to your project that mistakes are sure to be caught.

It is very easy to take [quality in translation](#) for granted. Few realize how a seemingly simple translation goes through multiple steps and multiple experts to ensure that any errors are caught, re-examined, eliminated and how much your final translation has been vetted.