

## Gained in translation ■

## Science at the multilingual crossroads

This issue's translation section combines two texts ideally complementing each other. One discusses the challenges national biomedical journals previously published only in the country's vernacular language are facing when going bilingual. The other provides an as brief as possible account of how to plan and prepare for going multilingual.

Science writing never is a simple process. Neither is science translation. At its best, translation may even be an additional quality-assurance step during finalisation of source-language documents. Both writing and translating are most successful when bringing together medical and linguistic expertise in a team effort. Combine the two—and you are well poised to arrive at supreme-quality results.



## Outsourcing translations: The hows and whys of it

by Gabriele Berghammer

According to Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary [1], 'outsourcing' is procuring services under contract with an outside supplier. 'Insourcing,' as we learn from its Oxford counterpart [2], is the reallocation of work previously done by an outside supplier to in-house staff (insourcing has not yet made it into Webster's). Then there's multi-sourcing—not yet covered by either of the two dictionaries—i.e., the disciplined blending of services from both internal and external providers [3].

With translation services, too, that's the three options you have. A distinct benefit of insourcing is to have an internal team of translators who are familiar not only with their company's products, placement strategies, and corporate philosophy, but also with company style and terminology, workflows, development backgrounds, and the competitor situation—all aspects that are important to be able to produce high-quality translations for diverse markets. Whenever workload peaks, an in-house translation division will also be able to seamlessly outsource relevant services to external partners. However, not every company—particularly when small- or medium-sized—, will be able to afford the luxury of an in-house translation team. For people not dealing with translation every day, buying one from external providers can be challenging at best. How to outsource for optimal success?

According to the proverb, "He who fails to plan, plans to fail." Companies intending to go international should start making provisions for multilingual projects as early on as possible by looking for a suitable translation service provider and giving translators sufficient lead time to familiarise themselves with the company's philosophy and products. Another aspect of preparing for the global market is to take a close look at the company's document portfolio and ask some hard questions about it: are our documents accurate, clearly written, and as concise as possible? Are they impeccably formatted? Is the company-specific

terminology used consistently throughout? Are our texts free of colloquialisms, idioms, and images that are unlikely to work in the target language? Any error or oversight in a source text that's translated into ten target languages will be multiplied times ten.

In early 1998, then British Prime Minister Tony Blair addressed a gathering of Japanese businessmen during his visit to Japan [4, 5], vowing to control public spending to reform Britain's industry and welfare state: "Have no doubt: this Government will not be deflected by short-term considerations. We will take difficult decisions. When it comes to putting our economy on a secure footing for the long term, we intend to go the Full Monty. This is a very English expression. Most of you won't know what it means. It is an expression of absolute determination and I am determined that nothing will get in the way of making Britain a model 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. The Full Monty is also the name of a new British film. I hope you will have a chance to see it in Japan soon" [6]. Mr Blair made reference to the 1997 British hit movie "The Full Monty," paying tribute to the film's redundant Sheffield steelworkers who, instead of staying on the dole, decided to start a career as male strippers.

Including such culture-bound images is never a good idea when addressing a foreign audience. Even if the words are translatable, they may be devoid of meaning in a different culture. The phrase 'the full monty,' for example, is thought to derive from the tailoring business of a certain Sir Burton who also had premises in and chose to live in Sheffield, with 'the full monty' referring to a complete three-piece suit [7]. The phrase had apparently been in circulation before the film, but it had not appeared in print. The movie's plot was a fundamentally British one, moving the nation's postimperial working-class identity centre stage—and it had not been released in Japan. For all of these reasons, Blair's wordy reference is unlikely to have evoked the intended image in his Japanese audience's mind.

Some things simply don't travel across cultural frontiers. Therefore, the better the shape of your source-language documents both linguistically and technically, the >

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- > smoother the translation process. Once you've reviewed your documents and found a translation provider—what next? Here's a brief summary of things to consider before, during, and after translation.

### Defining the purpose of the translation

No text is an end in itself. Rather, it should lead to action or impact attitudes or behaviour. Do not leave your translators in the dark about what you hope to achieve with a given text.

**What's the function of the text?** Generally speaking, texts are either informational or communicative. Informational texts try to make sense of reality, using mainly descriptive and argumentative language. Texts falling into this category include product fact sheets, biomedical publications, text books, or scientific reports. Communicative texts, on the other hand, establish social relations, using mainly expressive language that conveys feelings or attitudes. Such texts include promotional brochures, editorials, written speeches, or creative and aesthetic texts. Of course, no text will strictly be either one or the other—but categorising texts helps determine how they should best be translated and which register to use. The more the translator knows about the situational context of a translation, the better able he is to make specific choices to produce a made-to-measure translation.

**For-publication or for-information translation?** Is the translation intended to merely give a few people in your department a rough idea about what a foreign-language text says or will the translation go to press? A translation intended for information purposes only can generally be produced faster than a translation intended for publication. To be sure, even the for-information translation will be an accurate rendering of the original—but it may be less polished stylistically than a translation that's going to be published. Here's an example of how translation of the same text genre, a biomedical publication, may require two diametrically opposed translation strategies:

Picture a research scientist who wants a manuscript translated from German into English. The client's explicit goal is to have the manuscript published in a peer-reviewed journal. In this case, the translator is not doing her job well if all she does is translate the source text and make sure that the grammar and medical terminology are correct. With the declared goal being that translation results in a submittable text, the translator should produce a text that fulfils the expectations of the target-language reader in terms of style and format. This may require moving misplaced information between the different sections of the manuscript, pointing out to the author that the text misses out on some logical links, correcting mismatched references or legends, or bringing the paper in line with relevant publication guidelines, such as CONSORT, STROBE, or journal house style. Ultimately, translation may result in a manuscript that differs substantially from the source text.

Alternatively, company X needs a biomedical publication authored by one of its competitors translated from German into English because the publication is thought to contain misleading statements about one of

its products. Company X therefore intends to instigate legal action against its competitor, and the German-to-English translation will be part of the briefing package prepared for company X's lawyers. In this case, the translator must take care to faithfully render every detail and nuance of the source text. The main focus of translation is not to arrive at a stylistically supreme translation getting all of the medical jargon right, but to stick to the source text as closely as possible.

**Legally binding or courtesy translation?** Is the translation of your company's terms and conditions to be legally binding in the target language or is the translation merely provided as a service to foreign-language readers? If the target text is to be legally binding, make sure your company's legal department is involved every step of the way until final approval of the translation to make sure each item has been correctly interpreted. If push comes to shove, an official translation may have to hold water in court. Alternatively, the translation may be provided merely as a courtesy to your foreign-language clients. In this case, add a note to the effect that the target-language version is a courtesy translation only and that, in case of discrepancies, the source-language version shall prevail.

"Aren't translators in a position to faithfully transfer a text into the target language, maintaining all the nuances and intended meanings of the source text?," you may wonder. Even in a single language, ambiguities abound, and evaluating the meaning of words is often a matter of subjective interpretation.

For example, in a 1991 US court case, the defendant's comparative advertisement claimed that the competitor's product was subject to "catastrophic failure." The plaintiff produced evidence that the medical community targeted generally understood catastrophic failure to mean "a failure resulting in serious equipment damage or patient injury." The defendant countered that the definition of catastrophic failure had been taken from an engineering dictionary, which described the concept as referring to "a sudden failure not associated with typical wear." The court rejected this explanation, stating that there was "no evidence that the dictionary definition reflected a common understanding among targeted consumers" [8].

How much the meaning of even every-day words can be a matter of interpretation becomes clear from the following example from bilingual Canada.

In a 2002 Canadian court case, the defendant was charged with being "in possession of various machines and materials adapted and intended to be used in forging credit cards." In an appeal against the judgment, the defendant's lawyer maintained that the word "adapted" was interpreted by the court as meaning "suitable for" rather than "modified or altered." With the word "adapted" having two equally viable meanings, the lawyer maintained, it was not possible to determine with certainty which of the two meanings the lawgiver had intended, which is why the ambiguity should be resolved in favour of the accused [9].

The Canadian Criminal Code is a bilingual statute both the English and French versions of which are equally authoritative. It is Canadian practice for statutory interpretation of bilingual enactments to begin with a search

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for the shared meaning between the English and French versions. In cases where the words of one language version give rise to speculation, the courts should first turn to the other official language version to see whether the meaning in this language is unequivocal. Because the proper interpretation of the word “adapted” was resolved by clear language in the French version, the appeal was refused [9].

Additional challenges may arise in legal translation when translating between civil and common law cultures as is the case for translations between most European languages and English. Therefore, particularly when it comes to offering legal texts in more than one language, make clear which language versions are to be considered official, because even the slightest ambiguity can affect legal analysis and decision making.

**Who’s the audience of your translation?** When having a Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) and Package Leaflet (PL) for a given medicinal product translated, it should be immediately clear to any medical translator that the SPC addresses healthcare professionals and the PL targets patients. With other documents, this may be less obvious. Therefore, be sure to let your translators know whether they will be writing for healthcare professionals, adult patients, or children so they can adapt the language they use to the level of health literacy of their readers.

**Does the entire text need translating?** Clients sometimes deplore the high costs of translation. You may have a 100-page report that you want translated into English. Think about whether your audience is really going to read all 100 pages—or whether translating the Executive Summary may suffice. Alternatively, you may choose to omit sections not relevant to foreign-language readers. Finally, some source-language documents may benefit from being trimmed down to avoid redundancies and delete unnecessary information—a step that also contributes to reducing translation volumes and costs.

**What language variant do you need?** Finally, tell your translator whether your translation into English is intended for a British, an American, or an international audience, whether transposition into German is intended for the German, Austrian, or Swiss market, or which regions your Spanish or Portuguese translations are intended for.

### Specifying additional services

**Supportive services.** Many translators also offer services other than translation proper, such as editing, reviewing, rewriting, adapting, gisting, or updating documents.

**Developing style guides in the source or target language.** Translators generally work with their own proprietary style guide to ensure that the texts they deliver are uniform in style and formatting. For companies working in more than one language, a style guide—a set of standards for the writing and design of documents—should be available for each. Style guides contain instructions on punctuation (e.g., use of spaces, commas, dashes, or quotation

marks), spelling (e.g., capitalisation, names, titles, units of measurement, mathematical and scientific symbols, abbreviations, acronyms, hyphenation, or transliteration), the design of tables and figures, or specific terminology to be used or avoided. Particularly typographic conventions can vary greatly between languages.

**Glossaries and terminology databases.** Glossaries and terminology compilations increase the consistency of both your source and target language documents by documenting and promoting correct usage. A glossary is a list of terms in a particular domain of knowledge with the definitions for those terms. It generally appears at the end of a document and includes terms within that document which are either newly introduced in the text or uncommon. Terminology denotes a more formal discipline which systematically studies the labelling of concepts particular to a given domain of human activity. The simplest form of compiling company-specific terminology is a (bi- or multilingual) word list. Alternatively, terminology software, often integrated with other computer-aided translation (CAT) tools, may be used. An entry in a terminology database also includes meta-information on a given term, such as its source, definition, or synonyms, and may look as follows:

Figure 1 Entry in a terminology database

<b>en:</b> proprietary medicinal product	<b>de:</b> arzneispezialitäten
<b>source:</b> directive 2001/83/EC	<b>source:</b> richtlinie 2001/83/EG
<b>def:</b> any ready-prepared medicinal product placed on the market under a special name and in a special pack.	<b>def:</b> alle arzneimittel, die im voraus hergestellt und unter einer besonderen bezeichnung und in einer besonderen aufmachung in den verkehr gebracht werden.
<b>context:</b>	<b>context:</b>
<b>note:</b>	<b>note:</b> ‘fertigarzneimittel’ is the term used in the German AMG
<b>synonym:</b>	<b>synonym:</b> fertigarzneimittel (see note)

**Computer-aided translation (CAT) tools.** Translators will be able to advise you on whether they think using a computer-aided translation (CAT) tool makes sense for your company’s documents. The core of most CAT tools is a translation memory (TM). TMs consist of text segments in a source language and their translations into one or more target languages. These segments can be paragraphs, sentences, or phrases (individual words are the domain of terminology bases rather than TMs).

The concept of TMs is based on the notion that sentences used in previous translations can be recycled. A TM breaks the source text into segments (e.g., sentences), looks for matches between the source text and previously translated source-target pairs stored in the database, and displays any matching pairs as translation candidates. The translator can accept a candidate, replace it with a new translation, or modify it to match the source. When instructing the TM to search for 100% matches only, it will retrieve only segments of text that are a perfect match to the segment you need translated. Alternatively, fuzzy matching algorithms

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- > retrieve segments that are similar to the new source-text segment and can be adapted manually (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Translation memories: reusing previously translated text

previously translated language pair stored in the TM	en:	WonderDrug should be taken with food to minimise the risk of gastrointestinal irritations.
	de:	Um das Risiko einer gastrointestinalen Irritation zu minimieren, sollte WonderDrug mit einer Mahlzeit eingenommen werden.
new sentence to be translated	en:	WonderDrug should be taken with food to minimise the risk of gastrointestinal irritations.
100% match available in the TM	de:	Um das Risiko einer gastrointestinalen Irritation zu minimieren, sollte WonderDrug mit einer Mahlzeit eingenommen werden. <100% match>
new sentence to be translated	en:	<b>NovelDrug</b> should be taken with food to minimise the risk of gastrointestinal irritations.
92% fuzzy match available in the TM	de:	Um das Risiko einer gastrointestinalen Irritation zu minimieren, sollte <b>WonderDrug</b> mit einer Mahlzeit eingenommen werden. <92% match>

As a rule of thumb, the larger a document, the more standardised its language, the more frequently it is updated, and the better formatted it is, the more beneficial a translation memory is going to be, increasing both the consistency and the turn-around time of translation. Conversely, for short, one-off texts using highly creative language, use of a translation memory may not be the most time-efficient approach.

When you've got loads of electronically available documents in both the source and target languages and opt for the use of a TM, your translator may suggest 'aligning' these source and target language documents to make them available for future use in a TM.

### Certified, legally certified, or notarised translations.

Although both the name tags and legal requirements vary from country to country, a certified translation, typically required for official use by a non-governmental organisation, is a fully checked professional translation. The translator certifies that he or she is fluent in both the source and the target languages and that the translation is complete and accurate to the best of the translator's knowledge and ability. The translation is generally stamped and numbered and returned with a translation certificate. A notarised translation is a translation that is signed and dated by the translator in the presence of a notary public. Notarisation indicates that the identity of the person signing the certification is confirmed by the notary public and that the translator has declared on oath and in writing that the translation is true and faithful. Finally, a legally certified, or sworn, translation is one that is done or approved by a court-certified translator. Such translations are required by certain organisations and especially courts.

Always check what level of legalisation is required for a particular translation; in many cases, a certified translation may be sufficient. Of note, however, none of these levels of legalisation say anything at all about the quality of the translation—an important point to consider when it

comes to medical translations that need to be legally certified. Court-certified translators are generally specialised in legal translation, but they may have little expertise in translating medical texts. In this case, have a medical and a court-certified legal translator collaborate.

**To back translate or not to back translate...** Back translation—translation of a translated text back into the language of the source text that is made without reference to the original—has traditionally been used as a quality-control step to determine whether a text has been accurately rendered in the target language and is free of additions or omissions. For sure, high-quality translations do require a tight and thorough review process, but not everybody (including myself) is convinced that back translation is the best way to do it.

Every text can be translated into another language in many equally correct ways. Similarly, there are many equally correct ways a given translation can be translated back into the source language. Although I can see how a back translation could spot grave inconsistencies, additions, or omissions relative to the source text, it is unlikely to say anything about the stylistic, terminological, grammatical, syntactic, or semantic quality of the original translation— aspects that will still need to be reviewed separately. Not only does back translation double the cost of translation, it also takes a linguist or other expert to check the back translation against both the source and target texts—an additional time and cost factor. With thorough quality assurance in place (see below), the need for back translations is likely to be minimal.

### Obtaining a translation quote

**Have a sample text handy.** When contacting a translator for a translation quote, have a sample text ready to send to the translator. Most translators will be hesitant to give even a rough quote unless they have first seen the source text. Even a cursory look at the source text will give the translator a good idea of how much it takes to translate it. The professional ethics require that the translator consider confidential any information or document supplied by a potential client.

**Individual translator or team of translators?** Taking into account your time- and deadlines, can the volume of translation be handled by a single translator or will a team be needed? Based on rough estimates, one translator can handle about 2000 words a day on average. Therefore, when you need a 6000-word document translated by tomorrow morning—no way can a single translator handle this. When working with a team of translators, some time should be allowed for coordinating the translation process between all team members to make sure translation memories can be exchanged, terminology can be harmonised, and the final translation can be checked and revised to avoid patchwork.

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**One target language or many?** Do you need your English text translated into German only—or into a number of western European languages, Russian, Chinese, and Japanese? In the first instance, you may choose to work with an individual translator—deadline and translation volume permitting. If you need several target languages, including languages using different character sets, you are probably going to opt for a translation agency coordinating the entire multilingual process for you—from selecting and negotiating prices with the translators to collecting the terminology, having the translations revised and getting the documents typeset.

**How to determine the level of competence of translators?** Obviously, translators should have a thorough knowledge of both the source and target languages, translating competence, and cultural and technical skills. According to European standard EN 15038 [10], these competences should be acquired through (1) a formal higher education in translation, (2) an equivalent qualification in any other subject plus a minimum of two years of documented experience in translating, or (3) at least five years of documented professional experience in translating.

Yet, when it comes to highly technical and complex subject areas such as medicine, fulfilling a set of formal, yet vague, requirements may not be enough [11]. Ultimately, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Ask for references or samples of translated text. You may not find out whether translators are sufficiently proficient in your subject area unless you have worked with them. Also, it will take some time for even the most experienced translator to become fully familiar with your company and products. Therefore, the closer the relationship with your translator, the more effective the translations are going to be. Overall, however, translators should not be learning about a particular subject area at the client’s expense [4]: The more demanding your subject, the more critical it is to work with translators who already have a thorough understanding of your specialty.

The text excerpt given in Table 1, an arbitrarily selected publication [12, 13] from one of the latest issues of a German medical society, highlights how important it is to work with translators who are truly at home with a given subject field and text genre. According to the journal’s website [14], the print edition publishes articles in German only, whereas the online version provides scientific articles in both German and English; translation into English is performed by the publisher. Although the sample translation in Table 1 does not, to be sure, contain any serious errors, it disregards some basic principles of translating—and good writing. The resulting disparities between source and target and the rather unwieldy style result in a text which, I believe, ill-represents the German authors of the original text to their international readership. Therefore, particularly for translations that will go to press, make sure that the translators you select are experienced and well-versed in what they are expected to do.

Table 1 The proof of the pudding is in the eating: a real-life translation sample

Beeinflussung des Fettstoffwechsels durch systemische Vitamin-A-Derivate – Welche Empfehlungen leiten sich daraus für die dermatologische Praxis ab? [13]	The impact of oral vitamin A derivatives on lipid metabolism – What recommendations can be derived for dealing with this issue in the daily dermatological practice? [12]
Diese Übersichtsarbeit vermittelt in komprimierter Form einen, für den Dermatologen relevanten, Überblick über die einzelnen Vitamin-A-Derivate und der zu erwartenden Beeinflussung von Fettstoffwechselfparametern. Zudem enthält die Arbeit eine Konsensusempfehlung zum Umgang mit und Management von Laborwertveränderungen vor, während und nach einer systemischen Vitamin-A-Derivat-Therapie, die es dem Dermatologen im Praxisalltag erleichtern soll, für den einzelnen Patienten ein individuelles Therapiemanagement zu formulieren. Die Konsensusempfehlung ist eine gemeinsam erarbeitete Stellungnahme der „Deutschen Dermatologischen Gesellschaft“ (DDG) in Kooperation mit der „Deutschen Gesellschaft zur Bekämpfung von Fettstoffwechselstörungen und ihren Folgeerkrankungen“ (DGFF [Lipid-Liga] e. V.).	This review paper gives a brief, concise overview of the vitamin A derivatives and possible effects on lipid metabolism that can be expected. Additionally it contains a recommendation for secure handling of abnormal laboratory values before, during and after oral therapy with vitamin A derivatives. The aim of this article is to provide practical help and confidence in dealing with vitamin A derivatives in daily clinical practice. The publication was created in cooperation with the Deutsche Dermatologische Gesellschaft (DDG) and Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Bekämpfung von Fettstoffwechselstörungen und ihren Folgeerkrankungen (DGFF [Lipid-Liga] e. V.).

The stylistically distinct German phrase *vermittelt in komprimierter Form* is somewhat clumsily translated into English as “gives a brief, concise overview,” a tautology suggesting that the translator was unsure about which adjective was more suitable and then used both. The same sentence contains another tautology, i.e., in the phrase “possible effects ... that can be expected.”

The phrase “secure handling,” which may appropriately be collocated with ‘confidential data’ or ‘thin glass,’ does not work when combined with “abnormal laboratory values.” Although rendering *systemische Vitamin-A-Derivat-Therapie* as “oral therapy” is not altogether wrong because the result is the same, ‘oral’ stresses the mode of application and ‘systemic’ the type of effect the drug exerts (e.g., on the patient’s lipid metabolism).

Two concepts that are referred to throughout the German text, i.e., *Konsensusempfehlung* and *Dermatologen*, are lacking from the English translation—both essential aspects of the entire publication. The English sentence “The aim of this article is to provide practical help and confidence in dealing with vitamin A derivatives in daily clinical practice” lacks three aspects contained in the German original, i.e., (1) a reference to the effects of vitamin A derivatives on laboratory parameters—the focus of this publication, (2) a reference to dermatologists, and (3) a reference to tailoring treatment to the needs of the individual. Finally, both societies are spelled out in German without providing a translation to help non-German readers understand who these societies actually represent. (In the list of author affiliations, *Bekämpfung von Fettstoffwechselstörungen* was translated as “Fight against Fat Metabolic Disturbances”—leaving one to wonder just how fat such disturbances could become.)

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- > **What about copyright?** Make sure that the text you send for translation is not protected by copyright. It is not the translator's task to check whether the rights for translation have been obtained. Conversely, as a general rule, any translation is itself protected by intellectual property rights, just like any other original piece of writing. Unless otherwise agreed, what you buy from the translator is the right to use the translation for the purpose specified in the service agreement. If you wish to reuse the translation for a purpose other than the one originally agreed upon, talk to your translator. This has the added advantage of being sure that the translation will then also be adapted to suit its new purpose.

**Printing translator credits.** It is good practice to credit translators. By acknowledging their contribution, you motivate translators to supply high-quality work. Named translators will probably want to approve the galley proofs of the final publication to be sure that even last-minute changes were correctly implemented. Do not see this as yet another tedious and superfluous duty—but as an additional quality-control step that is to everybody's benefit.

**Defining the level of quality assurance required.** How thoroughly a text should be reviewed will depend on the purpose of your translation. Thus, for a for-information translation that's merely going to be read by a handful of people, a rough translation may be sufficient. In the case of an image-building brochure to be printed on glossy paper and distributed to hundreds of customers, a more elaborate review process will be needed. Here, European Standard EN 15038 [10] provides helpful guidance by defining four quality-assurance steps, i.e., checking, revision, review, and proof reading (see below).

**A word on pricing.** Translations are normally charged by word, standard line (50–55 characters including spaces), or page of either source or target text. This basic fee includes checking of the translation for correctness and consistency by the translator. It may also include revision and review by external experts as deemed necessary by the translator. However, additional review cycles and quality-assurance steps may not be included in the standard translation fee and should be detailed in the service agreement. When comparing prices between translation providers, find out more about what they actually include.

### Commissioning the translation

**Get everything you've agreed on in writing.** To guard against misunderstandings and disappointments, it is a good idea to get all of what has been agreed with the translator in writing.

**Be sure to provide the translator with the final version of the source text.** It may be tempting to get your project rolling as early on as possible, but having a translator work on a draft will, in most cases, end up being more time-consuming—and expensive—than waiting for the final version. In addition, sending your translator different text versions will increase the likelihood of errors and oversights slipping into the translation.

**Background material.** Along with the final version of the source text, provide the translator with relevant background information and other resources, such as terminology lists, your company style guide, previous target-language versions of the document, similar documents, legal requirements, or publications referenced in the text.

**Contact person.** Name a company representative as a contact for the translator who will stand by and help the translator sort out any questions that may arise during translation.

**Translators—a curious lot.** Translators are among the first readers of your texts—attentive and critical ones at that. By deconstructing the original text and constructing a new one in the target language, they are likely to spot inconsistencies or sections that may require clarification. And they will ask questions about them. Also, translations may be returned with translator's notes explaining why a particular translation decision was taken or highlighting terms or phrases that may allow for more than one interpretation. By entering into this dialog with your translator, translations will often contribute to improving the original text.

### checklist for outsourcing translations

#### defining the purpose of the translation

text function (informative or communicative) and text genre (e.g., scientific report or marketing brochure)  
for publication—or for information  
legally binding—or for reference only  
audience to be addressed (e.g., healthcare professionals, adult patients, or children)  
does entire text need translating—or will translating specific text portions or gisting be sufficient  
language variant (e.g., british vs american english)

#### specifying additional services

editing, reviewing, adapting, rewriting, updating, gisting  
compiling a style guide  
creating and maintaining a terminology database or glossary  
using translation memory or aligning existing translations  
(legally) certified or notarised translation  
back translation

#### obtaining a translation quote

have sample text (and confidentiality agreement) ready when asking for a quote  
deadlines and translation volume  
one translator, team of translators, or agency?  
determine the level of competence of the translator (through references, CV, and hands on work)  
have copyright issues been sorted out?  
agree on whether to include translator credits  
define level of quality assurance and number of review rounds required  
pricing (e.g., per word, line, or page of either source or target text)

#### commissioning the translation

get all of the above in writing  
provide translator with the final version of the source text  
provide translator with any available background information as well as parallel texts  
name a contact person

#### quality assurance

checking  
revision  
review  
proofreading

#### concluding the translation process

give feedback to the translator  
let translator have approved final version of the translated text or a printed sample copy

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## Quality assurance

As mentioned earlier, there are several possible levels of quality assurance [10]. Which of these is selected for a given project and who will be responsible for which step should be agreed upfront. Ideally, translators, clients, authors, typesetters, and graphic designers should work together in assuring the quality of their collective effort.

**Checking the translation.** The first step is for translators to check their own translation to make sure that the meaning has been correctly conveyed and there are no omissions, additions, or errors.

**Revising the translation.** In a second step, the translation is revised by a person with source and target language expertise other than the translator.

**Reviewing the translation.** In a third step, the translation may undergo monolingual review, e.g., by a target-language subject-matter expert. Translated texts are often sent for in-country review to have native-speaker company experts decide whether they are happy with the translation in terms of both content and wording.

**Reading the galley proofs.** Proofreading the typeset and layouted document is the last quality-assurance step—one which, unfortunately, is often omitted simply because it's not considered important. However, remember that, when it comes to translation, typesetters and graphic designers have to work with languages they neither read nor understand. During proofreading, therefore, the translator makes sure that all characters and typographic symbols have been correctly transferred from the word-processing to the desktop publishing application, words are correctly hyphenated, all target-language conventions have been fulfilled, and last minute changes—and there's always a few of those—have been correctly implemented.

## LAST QUALITY-ASSURANCE STEP

- all characters correctly transferred
- all typographic symbols correctly transferred
- words correctly hyphenated
- last minute changes correctly implemented

## Concluding the translation process

Pharmaceutical companies generally have sound quality assurance and review cycles in place for any of their critical documents, particularly those that go out to regulatory authorities or physicians in the market. Have translations of these documents undergo the same thorough review as the original texts.

**Give feedback.** Specifically, involve the translator in your in-house review cycle and provide him with an approved final version of the text. This will help translators learn your business and implement company preferences next time round. Finally, if you want to make your translators really happy, let them have a printed sample copy of that glossy brochure you produced.

## A word in closing

What has been summarised on these pages will often not take more than 10–15 minutes to discuss—minutes that are well spent. Experienced translators will ask you for much of the information presented above. If I'd told you right from the start that you merely needed to follow your translator's lead, you may not have read through the entire article. But now that you have, you won't be surprised about how inquisitive translators can be.

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## Bilingual copyediting: Beyond translation

by Aksel Seyahi and Ariel Surface



Scientific development depends on the accurate and efficient presentation of evidence-based research. Clearly, research must meet stringent requirements in its execution and interpretation to make a significant contribution. Poor writing of even sound scientific research however may misdirect the reader towards conclusions not supported by the study.

An illustration: A study presents the results of a surgical technique. The imprecise or over-confident presentation of the positive results then leads physicians, believing the results by virtue of the study being published in a reputable journal, to overuse this indication. As all surgical procedures involve some risk and cost, some patients receive unnecessary surgery, gain nothing and may even be harmed, often resulting in delay of the most effective treatment.

Situations such as the one presented above and many others like it may undermine scientific progress as well as the health and well-being of patients. Considering the difficulties in presenting clear, precise and accurate manuscripts, the copyediting of manuscripts for a bilingually published journal creates several important challenges for medical writers.

With the continuing and steady rise of English as the lingua franca of science, publishing in English has become a prerequisite for journals to raise their international profile. Over the past 130 years, the percentage of English-language journals listed in Medline has risen from 35% to 89% [1]. At present, roughly 9 out of every 10 new journals are published in English. Nevertheless, to facilitate the communication of science, publishing in the local language may still be preferred.

One such journal is *Acta Orthopaedica et Traumatologica Turcica* (AOTT), the official journal of the Turkish Society of Orthopaedics and Traumatology. AOTT will soon celebrate its fiftieth birthday. In accordance with its name 'ACTA', the journal, published originally in Turkish, has long been dedicated to the activities of Turkish orthopaedists. While AOTT domestically obtained a reputation to be proud of over the years, it did not receive numerous international submissions and citations.

The inclusion of AOTT in Medline in 2003 and the Science Citation Index Expanded in 2009 were two main milestones for the journal. As a new member of the Index, AOTT lagged behind its peers in international recognition.

To increase AOTT's international profile, the editors made the critical decision to institute English as the official publishing language.

There were 4 important reasons behind this crucial change: 1. To limit the migration of local scientific research to foreign journals, 2. To ensure that local studies reach a wider audience, 3. To attract a greater number of international studies, 4. To boost the number of citations and thus increase the journal's impact factor. Changing the publication language from Turkish to English after 50 years was certainly a radical decision. So as not to break with the journal's proud 50-year tradition of publishing in the native language, the editors decided to continue producing a Turkish translation alongside the official English version. In addition, to continue to attract local authors, submissions in Turkish were also accepted. This solution appeared to pave the road for a soft transition.

Prior to the transition to English, AOTT had the great fortune to work closely with a dedicated, practiced editor, Hasan May. His work in ensuring that imprecise writing of good science was corrected allowed the editorial board to focus less on the quality of the writing during the review process. These issues were, however, not clear to the editorial board until the move to English.

At the beginning of 2010 the problems now facing the editors began to show themselves. An unexpected delay in the first issue and increasing delays in ongoing issues exposed the publisher's struggles in the copyediting of the journal. These issues resulted in its withdrawal, necessitating a search for a new publishing company. Unfortunately the second company also abandoned the job after publishing the final two issues of 2010, leaving AOTT without a publisher for the second time in one year. After assessing the situation, the editors decided to implement a new model to detect problems and ensure the regular publishing of AOTT in 2011.

To achieve the success of this new focus, an editor was appointed as the publishing coordinator to assemble a copyediting team. Under his control, two medical writers, one of them a native English speaker, were recruited. Together, this core team began work on the issues of 2011. Rather than using several stages of control, the team handled the English and Turkish translations together, going sentence by sentence. The first few manuscripts were enough to see the challenges of bilingual copyediting, which is far beyond a simple process of translation. Incomplete and

unclear translations were the first problem. Most English texts were far from acceptable, even translations certified by web-based international editing services, which naturally did not take into account the Turkish version for comparison.

The problem was deeper than simple grammar and spelling errors. Grammatically correct sentences could be scientifically incorrect, vague or even incomprehensible. Careful comparison of the translation with the original version exposed major structural problems; titles that did not reflect the main point of the study, undefined hypotheses, inappropriate methods to test the hypothesis, inadequate discussion of the results, and conclusions that were not supported by the results.

Other challenges resulted from little differences between the original Turkish version and the English one, requiring the simultaneous copyediting of both. This approach highlighted errors in translated and sometimes original English texts. These fundamental problems led the team to implement a skeptical approach, catching further conflicts even within the design and internal working of the studies themselves and transforming the copyediting process into a final strategic review process. Such serious problems within an editorially accepted article would normally necessitate consultation with the editorial board and numerous queries to be sent back to the author. As a result several articles had to be re-written by the copyediting team.

However, the addition of the coordinating editor in the redaction team was soon seen to be a great advantage. Integrating the orthopaedic knowledge of the editor with the redaction team's linguistic proficiency provided a sound foundation for the copyediting process. Working together, the team was able to correct the problems in the reporting of the study design and the structure of the article without having to constantly refer to the author. Having the same team work on all aspects of the copyediting process, including translation, ensured a uniformity in the journal's language and style. Additionally, the editor's support gave the medical writers more freedom, allowing them to take a wide range of initiatives and greater risks in the shaping of the articles as well as bringing a greater sense of ownership in their work.

From the editorial perspective, having a medical editor in the copyediting team was an important quality control step, relieving the tension and concerns resulting from the struggles of the previous year. Following this new system, AOTT was able to return to its original publishing schedule.

The new copyediting process necessitated changes in the way the journal was published. A publisher was of course still needed to undertake the physical and online printing of the journal. The copyediting team, after handling all corrections and consultations with authors, now sends

the articles in their final versions to be published. The total cost of publishing has been slightly reduced; the dramatic lowering of publishing costs offset the new costs of hiring two full-time medical writers.

The story of AOTT's transition highlights many of the common challenges facing non-English speaking journals when adopting English as the language of publication. While copyediting has long been regarded as a simple polishing of manuscripts before their publication, AOTT's editorial team discovered the importance of combining technical and linguistic knowledge. This integration served to ensure the accuracy of the journal's scientific reporting, surely one of a scientist's main responsibilities.

### Acknowledgments

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## Vital signs

Dear TWS,

I read Adam Jacobs' article (*TWS* 20(2):108-109) with some concern. I am sure that he has pointed up a general problem—as in fact the book review printed five pages later also illustrates.

Why do so many people who should know better seem to think that the purveyor of a medicinal product would, if left to his own devices, report objectively on his product, but is sadly (poor dear) forced by commercial pressure to contract the reporting out to a medical writer because medical writers, an evil-minded brood, are the only people wicked enough to put a suitably product-favourable spin onto the report?

My experience of medical writers, and I don't think any reader of *TWS* would disagree with me, is that they try to err (if one can) on the side of objectivity, the risk of a 'slanted message' being introduced only when the medical writer's draft is later revised by the sponsor's publications manager and marketing editor (though, in fairness, this is also a relatively rare occurrence).

What can be done about this I have no idea. But thanks are due to Adam for sharing his experience, which however I am afraid will not be unique.

### Paul Woolley

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