

Communicate

Winter 2004/2005

The official newsletter of the Association of Translation Companies

European quality standard moves to critical phase

The drive to develop a quality standard for use by translation service providers is reaching a critical stage, as the public consultation phase which has been going on throughout the European Union since October 2004, nears its conclusion.

CEN Mirror committees in all the participating countries have been consulting with translation companies, freelance translators, academics and, crucially, purchasers of translations on the draft standard.

In January these committees will be meeting at local level to give detailed consideration to all the comments they will have received and to develop a single response document from each country.

“Undoubtedly this will be the most challenging phase,” said Liz Robertson, Chair of the UK Mirror Group.

“Those on the national Mirror Committees will have been intimately involved in the development of the standard over the last three years, so

will have an understanding behind the decisions that have led to the current structure and wording in the draft.

“However, now we have thrown the door open to invite comments from the widest possible interested constituency, I expect that we will come up against a mixture of plaudits and brickbats. I am confident though that this process will lead to suggestions for many valuable improvements, although pleasing all the people all the time may prove to be impossible.”

Mirror Groups will be submitting their national responses to AENOR, the Spanish standards institute, which has been coordinating the work programme, in time for a meeting scheduled to take place in May in Copenhagen.

“That meeting has been timetabled as the final gathering of the CEN committee. Everyone expects it will be the toughest of all the meetings, as we consider all the comments submitted from across Europe. In the end though I feel confident that



Liz Robertson, Chair of the UK Mirror Group

there is a will to see this process succeed.

“The translation profession is under attack from translation providers using the Internet to market globally. These operators appear to be offering customers fast turn-arounds and bargain basement prices. Too often though clients are finding that the quality of what is delivered is questionable and when things go wrong getting redress is impossible. One way we can all fight this threat is to emphasise to pur-

chasers that quality does matter. This belief has been the driving force behind the development of this standard. Professional translation providers need to demonstrate what sets them apart. Adoption of a recognised standard will help build customer confidence.”

To obtain a copy of the draft standard visit the British Standards Institute web site: www.bsi-global.com or the web site of any national standards body within the EC.

ATC conference judged to be best yet

Feedback from the Association of Translation Companies' annual conference, that took place at the beginning of November, showed a high degree of satisfaction from the delegates.

The conference had three

strands; education, developments in technology, and marketing.

A key presentation, which received the highest approval rate came from Liz Robertson, who set out details of the draft CEN standard and described how both the pro-

fession and translation purchasers could make their comments on the draft and so help influence its final form.

All presentations from the conference have been placed on the ATC web site, www.atc.org.uk and can be downloaded.

In this issue:

People	2
Company news	2
Professional indemnity insurance surgery	3
Chairman's message	4
Back translation	5



EUATC gets a new chairman

The European Union of Associations of Translation Companies (EUATC) has got a new President.

Alfredo Spagna, left, has taken over from Miguel Nunez. Spagna is managing director of Arancho Nordic Oy, a translation company and a leading member of the Finnish translation company

association, Suomen käännöstöimistöjen liitto, SKTOL.

Speaking about his new role, he said: "It is a great honour to have been elected to this important position. My predecessor has set high standards and I only hope I can do as good a job as he did.

"Translation companies and the profession as a whole are

facing many challenges.

Clients want and expect work to be turned round ever more quickly - often for the cheapest possible price. We have to promote the benefits of using professionally produced translations, as well as championing the quality agenda. An organisation such as the EUATC must play a crucial role in this important endeavour."

Company news

TransAction Translators take the rap

ATC members TransAction Translators are funkying up their image, practicing their urban beats and sharpening up their multilingual rap skills as they complete some work for a Swiss music festival - Wordbeat.

The festival is currently in the planning stages and TransAction are helping the organisers bring the project to life by translating summary

information from German to English - proving that the Sheffield-based translation agency still have their finger very much on the pulse!

The Wordbeat festival aims to deliver a diverse festival of music to Switzerland. Festival originator, Vinod Gahder, explains where the inspiration for this event came from:

"The German-speaking world has, so far, lacked a festival which puts words at the heart of music, emphasising and cultivating the importance of language as a means of conveying content and lust for life. The absence of such an event is all the more surprising given that modern texts

and lyrics have been gaining importance in all the music charts and dance venues, through hip hop in particular.

We hope the festival will attract artists who care about what they are singing about - from Tom Waits to Roots. Once established, with the first Wordbeat festival being held in 2005, we hope it will continue to become an annual festival - one of the stalwarts in the Swiss festival calendar."

This assignment makes a refreshing change for TransAction, who are more used to assisting businesses in international sales and marketing drives. Music specialist and project manager

Daniel Collis comments:- "Having attended a few festivals over the years it was very interesting to work on this project, so I could see how the foundations are formed. This festival certainly sounds like it would be one for the more discerning music lover, a welcome change from the wealth of pop-based festivals dominating the summer months.

Although we work in numerous industry fields this is the first time we have worked on anything of this particular nature. The project ran smoothly, so we now hope to build on this success, becoming expert music industry translators - expect to hear the first single from Trans and the Actions early 2005."

ATC recruits its first member from Poland

GET IT Professional Translation Centre, one of the largest translation companies in Poland, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe, has joined the Association of Translation Companies as an overseas member.

A decision to join the ATC was taken after the company's managing director Piotr Czajkowski, attended the Association's annual conference.

Established for 10 years, the company annually translates more than 16,000,000 words. Since joining the AT the company has quickly started to

build up alliances with UK-based ATC members who have found demand for Polish increasing since Poland's entry into the EC.

GET IT, which has over 2,000 clients across the world, joins a growing band of overseas members of the ATC. The Association now has members in Australia, Germany, Greece, Italy, India, Spain, The Netherlands and the USA.

"We are delighted to welcome our first recruit to the Association from Poland," said ATC Chairman, John Wheen.

"Mila Tova"

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Make sure you read all the small print

We published a cautionary tale recounting one translation company's experience of a PI claim that went wrong. In this article the ATC's profession indemnity insurance advisors, McParland Finn provide helpful guidance on the best way to avoid such problems

As a professional, you naturally owe a Duty of Care to anybody who might reasonably rely upon your advice or services, whether you charge a fee for these or not. This means that you have a duty to ensure that the health, social or financial position of any person you offer your services or advice to does not suffer as a result of your influence.

In addition people demanding higher standards of service, are more certain of their rights as consumers and are constantly reminded of the "rewards" that can be reaped from seeking compensation through legal action. This heightened awareness means that there has never been a greater need for you and your business to maintain an adequate level of Professional Indemnity Insurance protection.

Professional Indemnity Insurance is an essential product for any business that offers any kind of advice or service and is often one of

the largest single items of expenditure a business can incur in terms of premium and claims. It is also a notoriously volatile sector of the insurance market - something for which many professional practices have paid an unnecessarily high price in the past.

Ultimately, the true test of any policy and Insurer is when a claim does actually arise and you as the Insured also have an important role to play. The need for you to ensure your Professional Indemnity policy terms and conditions or in other words the "small print" are met is absolutely vital.

How do you recognise a Professional Indemnity claim?

Many situations can be recognised as potential claims, before they actually become formal claims made against you. It is important that warning signs are noticed and acted upon as soon as possible to reduce the chances of the claim developing further.

Some of the danger signs may include:

- ♦ Verbal complaint from a dissatisfied customer or a threat of "taking the matter further"
- ♦ Letter of complaint alleging neglect, error, omission
- ♦ A client refusing to settle or delaying settlement of an account for an unreasonable length of time

Some things to remember:

- ♦ Ensure you read and fully understand the policy cover, ensuring you pay special attention to the claims conditions and what constitutes a claim or circumstance.
- ♦ If you have any queries, ensure you get clarification from your Insurance Broker.
- ♦ Ensure you understand what to do on the discovery of a claim or circumstance.
- ♦ Check the notification period - you may only have a specific period of time to

notify insurers on the discovery of a claim or circumstance.

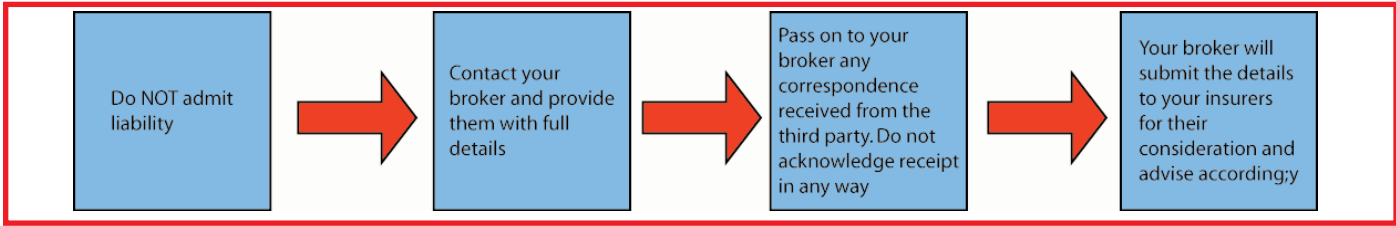
- ♦ Check where notification should be given and in what format - usually in writing.
- ♦ Do NOT admit liability, make an offer, promise or payment without your Insurers consent.
- ♦ Failure to comply with the policy conditions could prejudice the cover you expect to receive.

If in doubt - **NOTIFY!**

When you become aware of an actual claim, or are faced with a set of circumstances which you feel may give rise to a claim follow the procedure outlined in the diagram below.

Do not make a judgement of whether you think the circumstances are valid or not. Leave this judgement to your Insurers.

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Insurance for your reputation

Translators forum held in Riyadh

The Saudi Association of Languages and Translation (SAOLT) joined forces with the Rawafid Corporate Training Center, to stage a translators' forum recently in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The event was the first in its kind in the region in terms of its professional focus.

The forum was launched with a speech from Dr. Ali Al-Ghafeis, President of the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training in Saudi Arabia.

Over 400 visitors from various regions came to attend the forum symposiums and participated in the other activities.

The audience was made up of academics, policy makers, translation clients, practitioners, service providers, and educators/trainers.

The sessions included:

- Translation Technology
- Professional Development
- Terminology
- Status of The Profession
- Experiences in Translation
- Translation Management
- Future of the Profession

A message from the Chairman of the Association of Translation Companies

Forecasts point to bumpy ride ahead for translation profession



John Wheen, Chairman of the Association of Translation Companies

Where will 2005 take the UK translations market? According to OECD Leading Indicator forecasts outlined at the ATC November conference, the UK economy may turn negative by midsummer. The London Chamber of Commerce recently reported a 3% decline in business confidence. The State is now spending 50% more per day than five years ago, with a forecast of a 100% increase by 2009. To sustain this, the UK's Daily Telegraph reports that higher taxes and interest rates must follow a third Labour term.

Despite the UK Chancellor's bullish pre-election forecast of 3.25% economic growth next year, it would seem as though Translations Companies not tied into Government Contracts may have to endure another year of survival strategies.

However, could Treasury forecasts of five million job losses overseas over the next five years from Europe and the USA actually work in our favour? These jobs will mostly go to India and China, where, according to the Telegraph, wage rates are only 5% of those in Britain. For

manufacturing sectors, could this mean increased imports requiring quality product and marketing translations for EU traders?

Or will we see improvements in India and China's translations capabilities to match their increased trade, placing price pressure on EUATC members?

Given that threat, the new CEN standard, raising quality standards for the Translations Industry, may yet prove a defence for translations companies in Europe.

Feeding into our quality infrastructure must be sufficient translators of quality. In the UK, we welcome Isabella Moore as director of National Centre for Languages, with whom the ATC's Education Secretary, Helen Eckersley, is working. They are starting out on the process of developing educational packages designed to help university students learn business disciplines through work placements.

ATC members are being urged to engage in this new scheme to give practical experience to our future translators.

Finally, those ATC members who send multilingual greetings cards to clients at this time of year may learn from my Company's experience.

1st Transnational selected a really attractive charity card, placed an order and received a proof. It was thanks to a German student on work experience that we were able to tell the publisher about the two typographical errors in their German translation of "Happy New Year"!

And on that note, on behalf of the ATC Council, may we wish you a genuine "Frohes Fest"!

John Wheen
translations@1stTransnational.com

e-Learning project launched

The Language Technology Centre (LTC) and Computer Publication Group Ltd in collaboration with Software Information Designs Ltd have commenced a project that is aimed at providing a pragmatic, easy-to-use multilingual eLearning service, which allows any time, anywhere and anyhow access to personalised, high quality learning content.

According to LTC's Dr Adriane Rinsche, the need to improve eLearning services is backed by a wide range of independent research.

"For example a survey commissioned by the European Directorate General Education and Culture identified the main obstacles to lifelong learning as being time and money.

"Although European citizens recognise the personal and social benefits of learning, the lack of time due to job and family commitments is seen as an obstacle. This suggests that implementing lifelong learning effectively must find ways to enable people to combine activities in ways that suit them practically and personally."

Studies by IT Skills Research Programme and consulting firm Ovum Holway suggest that the take-up of eLearning in Europe has been slow. While the 2002 report, Quality and eLearning in Europe, revealed that 61% of all respondents rated the overall quality of eLearning negatively. Only 1% rated it as 'excellent' and only 5% said it was 'very good'.

Other factors that have inhibited eLearning, include fear of mis-investment due to lack of established suppliers, no clear defining standards and inadequate accessibility or free access

"The AMBIENT LEARNING project aims to find solutions to the many identified barriers and will seek to provide a pragmatic, easy-to-use eLearning service, which allows any time, anywhere and anyhow access to personalised, high quality learning content in multiple languages. Its secondary objective is to validate the provision by demonstrating the various services in five European countries - Italy, Germany, Greece, UK and Ireland," said Dr Rinsche.

For more information visit Language Technology's web site: www.langtech.co.uk

Same questions - different continent

While Europe edges its way towards an accepted quality standard for translation service providers, Scott Crystal of ATC overseas member company American Translation Partners, offers some controversial views about one notion of quality control - back translations



Translating documents into any language requires using the appropriate terminology and a clear and concise writing style. Terminological accuracy and effective prose must blend seamlessly; otherwise, the message will lack quality, efficacy and reliability needed in documents destined to the target market.

We emphasise to our clients that quality translations require a thorough review process. Every document we translate undergoes close scrutiny – not once, but a minimum of three times and as many as nine or ten times. We begin the review process with a draft translation performed by native tongue translators, then the documents are reviewed by editors and proofreaders (linguistic reviewers).

The track changes allow the team members and the project manager to see every change made to the text – additions, omissions or replacements. Each track change is marked with a time stamp and a unique color that is automatically assigned to each linguist with their initials or computer name.

Constructive criticism, citing references and resources is used, by inserting comments, the team of linguists and the project manager can discuss the implications and reasoning behind each change made. This method, along with the tools in MS Word, allows the team and project manager to observe and compare documents throughout their evolution.

Over the years, our project managers have compiled a bunch of questions typically asked by clients about quality control, ‘back translation,’ our translation process, certification and reliability. Here I take a look at the issues raised by ‘Back translations’, one element of quality control, and provide the answers we typically give.

Q: Is back translation an illogical waste of money and a time-consuming method of quality control that does not produce what you are intending it to accomplish?

A: Almost any translation has many equally correct ways that it can be translated into another language; similarly, a back translation also has many equally correct ways that it can be translated back into the source language. This makes it hard to believe that any back translation would be a reliable method of verifying the accuracy of a translation.

Q: What does back translation provide qualitatively?

A: Traditionally, it has been considered as a way to validate, approve, assure, guarantee, or prove that the translation is

accurate, follows the original source text, and reflects their ideas accurately. We believe that back translation provides absolutely nothing syntactically or semantically, about the translation and is unreliable as an effective quality control procedure in translation.

Q: If quality control of the document translation process is good, is there a need for back translation?

A: We don’t believe there is if you use a translation method that is thorough. Our work must be able to stand up to the most fastidious reviews.

Q: Who would support the use back translation if it takes more time and costs more money?

A: For certain organisations, there is no better way to validate a translation because they don’t understand the language (linguistics) and have no other viable resources to determine the accuracy of the work. Certain organizations dealing with pharmaceutical case studies, mental health evaluations, or instructions for medical equipment use back translation because they have no reason to believe it does not work.

Q: What are the inherent problems with back translation?

A: There are several translation companies and independent linguists that don’t support the concept of back translation as it is usually just a way to get into an argument about syntax and style choice (and a number of other linguistic factors) based upon varied cultural and educational backgrounds, or one of a million other variables another linguist will have to say about how you can improve a translation via the back translation process. Keep in mind, “Translation is an art, not a science.” Unlike science, where a certain scenario, with the same elements and same factors will produce consistent results – translation involves a human factor that adds a unique variable into the scenario. Another typical problem with back translations is that it sometimes involves the use of an in-house bi-lingual staff of the client rather than professional linguists. A client may consider the opinion of their bi-lingual employee as a professional translator and add even more variables into the quality control method supported by back translation.

Q: Consider this translation issue: if the change doesn't improve the sentence or phrase then how necessary is it?

A: If the end result is the same meaning to the reader, the only other reasons to change the translation would be so something sounds nicer than another version, works appropriately given the context with other translations/source text or has a better idiomatic fit. All of

these types of linguistic decisions are personally derived at by phonetic, aesthetic or cultural perspectives and do not provide a quantifiable measure of improvement. We all understand that these personal characteristics differ from one person to the next. It is quite typical of a client, using a bi-lingual employee to perform the back translation, to be persuaded by their employee’s unprofessional, personalised opinions about a translation that are unsubstantiated. This not only increases the amount of time spent on the translation, but also the cost for production.

Q: At what point is a translation complete when using back translation for quality control?

A: After the translation from the source language into the target language is completed, then you perform the back translation. But, the process is not over yet... You now have a translation into the target language and document translated back in to the source that allows you to identify differences from the original source file with the new back translation into the source. If you compare documents, you will likely find many differences. At this point, you have to wonder when the translation will be complete. You have two versions of the source and one translation into the target that you don’t know what to do with due to unknown differences. In your attempts to refine the quality of your translations by using back translations, you have been forced to fix your translation with a verbatim translation of your source text. This not only defeats the purpose of using editors and proofreaders in the first place, but also leaves you with a dry and sometime meaningless transliteration of your source text.

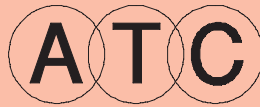
Q: What types of text seem suitable for back translation?

A: Technical documents, like MSDS or scientific formulas seem to be suitable for back translation because the source text is usually written by Engineers or Scientist and is less likely to include humour, colloquial expressions or complex literary statements. If the content seems like it is written by a computer, then it is easier to obtain an verbatim translation in the target language and a back translation would be helpful to verify the content. In MSDS or scientific formulas, back translation won’t provide any verification for syntax or semantics and at best provides synonyms for words taken out of context. **Scott Crystal**

www.americantranslationpartners.com

Have your say? Email your comments to info@atc.org.uk and we will use the best in the next issue of Communicate.

Communicate



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the Association of Translation Companies

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