Part I. Translation quality in the translation training context

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A global rating scale for the summative assessment of pragmatic translation at Master's level: an attempt to combine academic and professional criteria[1]

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1. Introduction

The purpose of the Master's in Specialized Multilingual Translation at the University of Lille III is to bridge the gap between academic studies and the reality of the professional world. For that reason, instructors are themselves primarily practitioners; their role is to ensure that throughout their studies students acquire not only the skills that underpin translational activity but also an understanding of the practices and requirements which await them in the translation market.

Consequently, our challenge was to develop a global rating scale for summative assessment to evaluate our students at the end of the two-year programme. In so doing, we attempted to answer the three key questions put forth by Martinez Melis and Hurtado Albir (2001: 275): what kind of evaluation will we adopt, what exactly are we setting out to evaluate, and how we will evaluate it?

2. Kind of evaluation

The evaluation takes place after students have completed their training, which means it has to be summative. Furthermore, given that our goal is to evaluate all students based on the same criteria, it has to be criterion referenced (Prégent 1990: 84), the basis of which is a code of correctness that takes into account not only errors (E, negative value) but also added value (AV, positive value), in other words those facets of their performance in which these future translators were particularly successful.

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1. This text was translated from French into English by Chad Langford.

3.   Object of evaluation

The goal of the scale we propose is to evaluate pragmatic texts (Delisle 1980: 22), that is technical, scientific, legal, economic, financial or commercial texts, the primary function of which is communication.[2]

Obviously, the point of departure of our evaluation grid is translation skills. There are a number of definitions for such skills, including that suggested by Roberts (1984), cited by Vienne (1998: 1). Although Roberts' formulation is not the most recent, its strength in our opinion lies in its ability to capture the skills essential to successful translation of a pragmatic text. These include linguistic skills in the source language (SL) ((a) in our evaluation grid) and in the target language (TL) (d), as well as translation skills (b), methodology (f), discipline (c) and technical skills (g). We have introduced a seventh skill, professionalism (e); indeed, since our Master's programme is a cross between the teaching of translation and the development of professional practices, we deemed it necessary to evaluate, additionally, the capacities that will make of the apprentice translator a reliable and efficient expert in modern-day working conditions, including rigor, speed and timeliness, the amount of work to be completed within a given time, the ability to revise, communicate, argue, collaborate, as well the ability to self-evaluate with an eye to career-long professional development.

What we propose, then, is a model for the summative evaluation of the translation of pragmatic texts which takes a broader approach with respect to criteria than has traditionally been suggested to evaluate in the context of translation teaching, such criteria having been essentially linguistic skills, competence in translation, and discipline (see for example models proposed by Lee-Jahnke 2001, Waddington 2001, and MeLLANGE 2006).

4.   Evaluation method

4.1.   How the translation project is carried out

At the end of the Master's programme, each student is assigned a personal translation project centred on a pragmatic text or set of texts (such as a

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2. What we have in mind is the kind of text that Delisle (1980: 22) calls "pragmatic texts", i.e. texts "qui servent essentiellement à véhiculer une information et dont l'aspect esthétique n'est pas l'aspect dominant" [whose basic purpose is to provide information and in which the aesthetic aspect is not dominant]. The term "pragmatic texts" is slightly broader in scope than "specialized" texts in that it also covers journalistic texts.

Table 1. Summative evaluation: breakdown

(a) Linguistic skills in the source language	(b) Translation skills	(c) Discipline	(d) Linguistic skills in the target language	(e) Professional skills	(f) Methodological skills	(g) Technical skills
20% out of 40 7 errors max	10% out of 20	10% out of 20	30% out of 60 15 errors max	20% out of 40	5% out of 10	5% out of 10
Errors in meaning E: −1 to −3, or more in certain cases AV: +1 to +2	Thinking through the translation / coherence E: −1 to −3 AV: +1 to +2	Mastery of the subject AV: +1 to +2	Language E: −1	Rigor 15% out of 30 10 errors max E: −1	Background research (bibliography, corpus)	Mastery of standard software applications and translation software
	Skopos E: −1 to −3, or more in certain cases	Appropriate terminology and phraseology E: −1	Style E: −1 to −3 AV: +1 to +2	Speed	Terminological and phraseological research (terminological databases, corpora, pre-existing glossaries)	
	Avoiding linguistic interference E: −1 to −3	Appropriate style E: −1 to −3, or more in certain cases	Concision E: −1 to −2	Revision		
			Cohesion E: −1 to −2	Communication Argumentation		
				Cooperation		
				Self-evaluation 5% out of 10		

user's guide, instruction manual, technical or commercial brochure, report, patent, contract, general-public press article or scholarly publication) with a total volume of 9,000 words and written in English, German, Spanish, Dutch or Russian to be translated into French. The instructor assumes the role of the client. In addition to the source text(s) (ST), the instructor provides each student with a style guide, a client-provided glossary for certain subjects, a schedule of deadlines and the criteria for evaluation. The schedule of deadlines allows for three stages in the completion of the project in a timeframe that is meant to reflect professional standards while at the same time remaining realistic. The student simulates 8-hour work days in a computer-rich environment; the instructor is present in the classroom for half of the time given for the project and is always available via e-mail. The instructor actively guides the first 25 per cent of the translation and remains at the disposal of the future translator for the remaining 75 per cent in the role of "client".

Stage 1: the student is required to hand in 25 per cent of the translation; the instructor provides a detailed, didactic review of this initial 25 per cent.

Stage 2: each student proofreads the translation of one of his peers and draws up a detailed report, which is then given to both the student concerned and the instructor. The instructor evaluates the relevance of the comments made by the peer-editor.

Stage 3: the final product is delivered. Each student hands in the translation, the accompanying translation memory, a terminological database, a bibliography, a TL corpus (for purposes of comparison) as well as a personal assessment of the project (cf. appendix). As pointed out by Bowker (2001: 346), this allows the instructor, who is not necessarily an expert in the field of the translated text, to understand the translation choices of the student under evaluation. Students are allowed to argue for and justify certain choices made in their translations and to mention any exchanges with experts on the subject of the text in a document called "argumentation".

The instructor applies the evaluation grid we propose to each translation project in order to analyse and evaluate it. Students are thoroughly familiar with the criteria used, all of which have been addressed at some point during the two years of the Master's degree programme.

4.2. Errors and added value

A negative value (or variable range of negative values) is assigned to each error based on the seriousness of the error. Based on our experience as

practitioners, it is our opinion that the seriousness of an error depends not on the nature of the error but, rather, on the negative impact the error has on functionality, comprehension, overall level of acceptability (the translation must respect the linguistic norms of the TL and the editorial norms of the text type translated) and ultimate usefulness (the translation must be readily publishable and should not necessitate major revisions) of the TT.

Added value is given for certain criteria when students have show true mastery, reflection and creativity and can be applied either to a passage or to the text as a whole.

In the sections that follow, we will list the issues that are covered by each of the error categories and we will explain how the errors are quantified.

(a) Linguistic skills in the source language

Errors in meaning: This category addresses questions like the following: is there equivalence in meaning between the ST and the TT? Or rather are there errors in meaning in the translation that can be attributed to a poor understanding of the SL? The kind of typology of errors we argue for might include absence of meaning (*non-sens*), misinterpretation (*contre-sens*), incorrect meaning (*faux-sens*) and shift in meaning (*glissement de sens*) (cf. Delisle et al 1999, Depraetere and Vackier, this volume, for definitions and examples of each error category, Nuñez and Moulard, this volume). It is important to mention here the relative seriousness of these semantic errors. For instance, does the error affect the text as a whole or only a secondary part of it? Is the basic function of the text (a contract to be signed, the use of an appliance, the results of a scientific experiment) compromised? Could the error lead to a loss in time and/or money? Could it lead to serious injury or even death? Depending on the gravity of the error, 1 to 3 points or more are subtracted. Seven errors are allowed, in which case zero points are given to category (a).

It is not uncommon for the ST to be poorly written, ambiguous or terminologicially incoherent; it can contain incomplete sentences and factual inaccuracies, all of these major obstacles to a high-quality translation (Bass 2006: 74, 90; Nordlund 2006: 39). Our grid allows for added value when the student manages to move beyond these flaws in the ST: between 1 and 2 additional points based on the impact that the incriminating passage in the SL had on the overall comprehension of the message.

We do not analyse in this category equivalence with respect to style and register between the ST and TT since we hold that style and register, in a pragmatic text, are not always pertinent variables for evaluation. We

agree with Vermeer (1989: 20 cited by Nord 1997: 29) that the very *raison d'être* (*Skopos*, cf. (b) Translation skills) of a pragmatic ST is often quite different from that of the TT: the target audience as well as the place and context of publication may not be the same. In such a case, what is judged is not equivalence in style or register but rather the successful adaptation of the text to the target audience and to the medium of publication. The ability to adapt the ST is evaluated in category (b), translation skills.

(b) Translation skills

Thinking through the translation process / coherence: for this kind of error, it is checked whether the student has grasped how meaning is structured in the ST and whether he has conveyed it faithfully in the TT without distortion of meaning. Although translation memory[3] tools are undeniably useful in the translation of pragmatic texts, they can be a potential trap for the novice translator, who often tends to translate segment by segment, resulting in what we might call a micro-vision of the text. This can result in missing the overall structure and content of the text and prevent a macro-vision of what is to be translated. In such cases, the final product will show a lack of coherence[4] (Brunette 2000: 175). Es result in minus 1 to 3 points; AVs result in between 1 and 2 points being added depending on the logical ambiguity in the ST eliminated in the TT.

Skopos:[5] the Skopos category aims to answer the following questions: has the student questioned the instructor-client in order to determine who the intended public is and what the ultimate purpose of the translated document is? Has he adopted the appropriate translation strategies? In other words, has he taken into account the intended public from a notional, terminological, stylistic and editorial point of view, and has he taken into account the goal of future use of the translated text in order to best manage the informational content? The student must demonstrate "sa capacité d'analyser diverses situations de traduction" (Vienne 1998: 2) [his capacity to analyse various translation situations] as well as his ability

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3. Cf. Matis (this volume), footnote 2 for a defintion of translation memory.
4. Brunette (2000: 175) defines coherence as "continuity of the meaning of a text from one idea to another and plausibility of such meaning".
5. Vermeer (1989 in Nord 1997: 29) explains Skopos as follows: "Translate/ interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function".

to find appropriate solutions in the translation. E minus 1 to 3 points, or more if the translation does not fulfil the communicative function as stipulated by the client.

Avoidance of interlinguistic interference: here, it is checked whether the student has effectively avoided semantic, lexical, syntactic and orthographic calques. One to 3 points are counted for E depending on the difficulties of understanding the calques generate in the TT.

(c) Discipline

This category evaluates three skills:

Mastery of the subject matter: has the student made use of his knowledge of the subject matter to back up decisions made in translating the text and, if so, has he successfully made explicit or re-established the logic of ill-formed or ambiguous argumentation in the ST? (AV of 1 to 2 points)

Subject-specific terminology and phraseology: are the terminology, collocations and turns of phrase used in the TT specific to the subject treated? (E minus 1 point)

Subject-specific style: is the style adopted typical of the discipline in question (e.g. are the metaphors used in translating an economic text appropriately chosen)? (E minus 1 to 3 points or more if the translation does not respect the standard editorial norms for the type of text translated)

(d) Linguistic skills in the target language

Four features are checked when it comes to linguistic skills in the TL:

Language: does the translation have spelling mistakes, grammatical or syntactic errors, misconjugated verbs, or errors concerning the use of punctuation, typography, gender, prepositions or articles? (E minus 1 point)

Style: is the language of the translated text flexible, fluid and idiomatic? Are collocations respected? Or, on the contrary, is it stylistically heavy or awkward and have lexical infelicities or inappropriate borrowings from the SL? (E minus 1 to 3 points depending on the degree to which comprehension of the TT is compromised. AV of 1 to 2 points based on the ease with which one reads the translated text)

Concision: are the terms used, (specialized or otherwise) sufficiently precise, or is the language overly wordy? Did the translator make inappropriate use of circumlocution at the expense of terminological or lexical precision? (E minus 1 to 2 points)

Cohesion: following Brunette's (2000: 175) definition of cohesion,[6] do the linguistic means used result in textual continuity with respect to form and content in the TT? Is there, throughout the translation, lexical, terminological and stylistic cohesion, or is the TT riddled with what Delisle (2001: 220) terms "disparates" [ill-assorted elements]? We argue that for pragmatic texts, it is more specifically a problem of lexical and terminological hesitation or of multiple, heterogeneous styles or registers. (E minus 1 to 2 points)

A maximum total of 15 errors is allowed in this category. Beyond that, we deem that the translated text is unacceptable in terms of standard linguistic norms in the TT, in which case the mark given for category (d) is zero.

(e) Professional skills

By "professional skills", we mean those skills which will make the future graduate a translator able to work efficiently and competitively (and, consequently, profitably) in true-to-life professional conditions. We maintain that students, even if they possess the linguistic, translational and disciplinary skills necessary, will fail to be recognised by their peers and future clients as experts in the field if they are unable to demonstrate professional rigor and the ability to manage their time effectively, self-evaluate, revise work, present arguments and cooperate. Five competencies are evaluated in this category:

Ability to work rigorously: are there additions or omissions in the translation (part of the text, title, subhead, graph, references, and so on) that are unjustifiable? Has the style guide been respected? Have the typographical standards of the ST been respected? Has the translation been cleaned,[7] are

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6. Brunette (2000: 175) defines cohesion as the "linguistic means used to ensure continuity of the form and content of a text".

7. During the translation process, both the source segment and the target segment are saved. Once the translation has been completed, the ST can be deleted from the translated document by using the "clean up" function.

there any translatable elements which have been left untranslated, typo-
graphical errors and/or infelicities? Does the terminology used match the
terminology in the glossary provided by the client or established by the
student? Is the final product presented and delivered appropriately, includ-
ing appropriate tree-structure and file names? If applicable, was the tran-
scription or transliteration system used consistently throughout the text?

   E results in one pointed being subtracted. A maximum total of 10
errors is allowed in this category. Beyond that, we deem that the trans-
lated text cannot be used by the client in its present state and requires
extensive revisions, in which case the mark given for this category is zero.

Ability to work in a timely fashion: does the student have a sense of organ-
isation and time-management? Were all deadlines respected?

Ability to revise: did the student carefully index his proofreading and revi-
sions and demonstrate a mastery of proofreading / revision techniques?

Ability to communicate and ability to present arguments ("capacité d'argu-
menter" (Vienne 1998: 3)): throughout the project, dialogue was estab-
lished between the student and the instructor-client. The student is asked
to contact the client in order to ensure that the client's needs have been
understood, and that the skopos of the translation is clear; he then estab-
lishes translation strategies for the project and has the opportunity to
justify certain translation choices in a document entitled "argumentation".
As pointed out by Bass (2006: 73), one factor that can compromise the
quality of a translation is the lack of communication between the transla-
tor and the client. The silent, anonymous translator of the past has come
to be replaced by an active language professional competent in matters
of communication, dialogue, decision-making, argumentation and pro-
fessional know-how, indispensable in the world of translation as we know
it today.

Ability to self-evaluate: "self-evaluation" (cf. appendix) covers the follow-
ing skills: does the personal evaluation completed by the student show suf-
ficient understanding of those strengths which can be used as selling points
with future clients? Does he recognise his weak points as a translator and
know how to overcome them? Does he show a capacity for self-critical
evaluation and demonstrate an eagerness to evolve professionally? Is his
opinion of his skills and capacities relatively objective, or does he tend to
over- or underestimate his performance?

Ability to cooperate ("capacité de coopérer" (Vienne 1998: 3)): we agree with Vienne, who states that "face à une spécialisation de plus en plus poussée de textes à traduire, [les traducteurs] ne peuvent opérer aujourd'hui sans l'aide d'autres experts (techniciens, juristes, médecins, etc.) [faced with an ever higher level of specialisation in the texts to be translated, it is no longer possible [for translators] to work without appealing to other outside experts (technicians, legal experts, doctors, etc.)]". For this reason, we strongly encourage students, within the context of their translation project, to consult specialists in the relevant field and to begin expanding their professional network. Students are asked to discuss any exchanges with specialists in the document "argumentation".

The last five skills are evaluated on a scale of 10 points.

(f) Methodological skills

In order to evaluate students' methodological skills, we deemed it essential for students not only to draw up a bibliography and terminological data-base, but also to develop a corpus in the TL, as suggested by Bowker (2001: 346) (cf. 4.1). Basically two kinds of search skills are evaluated in this category:

Background research: are the sources of information found in the bibliogra-phy pertinent? Are they reliable and diversified? Is the bibliography broad enough? Does the TL corpus established by the student include conceptual information vital to the comprehension of the subject treated?

Terminological and phraseological research: are the terms included in the students' terminological database pertinent? Is the database broad enough? Is it reliable? (For instance, are the terms defined? Are sources indicated? Are any contextual restrictions to the terms mentioned?) If necessary, did the student use already existing glossaries? Does his TL corpus include the linguistic information necessary to justify his trans-lation choices regarding terminology, collocations, and turns of phrase ordinarily used in the domain?

Methodological skills as we see them are based on "la capacité de gérer et de traiter l'information [capacity to manage and manipulate infor-mation]" as discussed by Vienne (1998: 2), who considers it a key element for overall translational skills.

This category (f) is evaluated on a scale of 10 points.

(g) Technical skills

For a translation agency, a good translator masters not only linguistic questions but also the technical tools which have become vital instruments to the trade insofar as they represent considerable savings in time and money (Bass 2006: 82, 92–93).

Accordingly, the instructor also tries to answer the following questions when assessing the students: is the future graduate fully computer literate? Does he master standard software applications and translation software? This skill is evaluated by measuring how the student uses these tools in the classroom as well as the quality of the final result (Note that the student has to hand in the final version of the translated text, the translated inserted elements (images and graphs, for example), his translation memory and terminological database).

This category (g) is evaluated on a scale of 10 points.

4.3. Mark weighting

In order to determine how to weight the different categories, we analysed three evaluative instruments among those most frequently used in the profession: BlackJack Translation Evaluation Tool, SAE J2450 Translation Quality Metric and Lisa QA Model 3.1. We also closely studied the criteria of conformity and certification according to the DIN 2345 and EN 15038 standards.

The comparison of criteria which, based on these tools and standards, determine the degree of quality of a translation and that of a translator's skills enabled us to establish that the most important elements for the ultimate user of a translated text were, in descending order, linguistic skills in the TL, linguistic skills in the SL, the ability to work rigorously, the appropriateness of terminology and style as well as terminological and lexical cohesion. The EN 15038 standard places greater importance on the ability to seek and process information, on technical skills, proofreading and revision skills as well as the ability to continue learning throughout one's professional life. On the basis of this analysis, we established the weighting of the different categories of our scale, which is as follows:

(a)   linguistic skills in the SL: 20% of final grade

(b)   translation skills: 10%

(c)   discipline: 10%

(d)   linguistic skills in the TL: 30%
(e)   professional skills: 20%
(f)   methodological skills: 5%
(g)   technical skills: 5%

5.   Conclusion

The rating scale used in the Master's programme in specialized translation at the University of Lille III is an innovative tool insofar as it is designed specifically to evaluate the translation of pragmatic texts and seeks to bring together criteria traditionally applied in the context of university translation courses and those criteria widely considered pertinent by translation professionals when they seek to recruit reliable, high-performance translators.

The grid, which has been used at our university for two years, can most certainly be perfected. That said, we maintain that the current working version is an effective evaluative instrument. Our ultimate goal, beyond that of summative evaluation, it to help bridge the gap between the university and the professional world by making future graduates aware of the existing criteria of excellence in the market of specialized translation and preparing these students to respond to them.

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Appendix. Self-assessment

- ✓ Were the deadlines stipulated in the schedule of due dates respected?
- ✓ Do you translate in a way that can be considered profitable in the profession (cf ±1 pg A4 / hour)? If not, what is the main element that is slowing you down?
- ✓ Is your own personal schedule precise enough? Are you satisfied with the way you organised your work? If you had to do the project again, what could you stand to improve in this area?
- ✓ Were you sufficiently rigorous?
- ✓ Was your background terminological research pertinent? Did this project teach you anything about such research and, if so, what did it teach you?
- ✓ Did you pay close enough attention to the sources you used?
- ✓ How did you use your corpus?
- ✓ Did you use translation assistance tools for this project? Why and how?
- ✓ Did you take the time to analyse all the functions of the translation assistance tools you used in order to use them as rapidly and efficiently as possible?
- ✓ Did you take into account the kind of document you were translating as well as the intended readership? Did you adapt the style, register, and lexical, terminological and notional choices accordingly?
- ✓ Evaluate your comprehension of the source language.
- ✓ Evaluate the quality of the target language.

1 ✓ What did you get out of the proofreading portion of the project a)
2 when you were the proofreader and b) when you received the com-
3 ments from your peer-editor?
4 ✓ What part of your work as a translator will you be most intent on
5 improving when you complete your next translation? How will you go
6 about doing so?
7 ✓ Which facet of this translation project did you complete particularly
8 well?
9 ✓ What are the weak points of your translation and how could you
10 improve them?
11 ✓ What are your strengths and weaknesses as a translator [SL] – [TL]?

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