Overview of the LS Translation Testing Program

Translating Division

Office of Language Services

U.S. Department of State

Bruce Collins (collinsba@state.gov)

Interagency Language Roundtable

Translation & Interpretation / Testing Committee Meeting

May 31, 2019

Translating Division (LS/T) Mission Statement

*To facilitate **written** communication with non-English-speaking governments and people through the provision of high-level translating support to the Executive Office of the President and the Department of State, and, on a reimbursed basis, to other federal agencies.*

Translating

Duties of the Translating Division

- Translate diplomatic documents for the White House and the Secretary of State (core mission) – treaties, correspondence, demarches, conference materials, reports
- Provide translation for any other US-based State Department activities – training courses, websites, audio files
- Support dozens of other Federal agencies with translations
- Screen foreign-language mail to VIPs from private citizens
- Certify conformity of foreign language texts of treaties and other international agreements

Snapshot of a typical year

- 1,422 projects, large and small (about 20 million words in all)
  - 1,229 translations (excluding ATAP)
    - 671 for State Department
    - 558 for other Federal clients
  - 103 Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program (ATAP) training projects (10 million words alone)
  - 69 tests
  - White House mail projects
- 140 language combinations
- Proliferation of formats

Types of materials translated by LS/T

- Diplomatic correspondence and instructions
- Treaties and other international agreements
- Laws and regulations
- Court documents
- Audio recordings
- Websites
- Speeches
- Course materials
- Briefings
- Conference documents

Major Topics Handled by LS Translators

1. Conflict resolution
2. Drug control
3. International security
4. Environment
5. Agriculture
6. International business and trade
7. Democracy, human rights, and labor
8. International finance and development
9. Maritime/fisheries issues
10. Legal issues
11. S&T
12. Transportation

LS/T Translation Testing Program
Testing Standards and Principles

2001 Translation Testing Program overhaul:

- Evaluation standards directly linked to job requirements
- Clearly defined standards and evaluation criteria
- Equitable testing environment
- Non-discriminatory procedures, impartial test evaluation

LS/T Translation Testing Program
Evaluative Process

- Review of application (available at www.state.gov/m/a/ols/) and résumé
- Invitation to test
- Translation exam
- Evaluation
- Notification
- Clearance

LS/T Translation Testing Program
Prerequisites for Applicants

- 5 years of professional translation experience
- U.S. citizenship or permanent residency
- C.V. highlighting translation experience
- 3 professional references
- Translation sample in applicant's strongest language direction (e.g., English > Arabic or Arabic > English): approximately 300 words of prose relating to international affairs

LS/T Testing Program

Initial Screening

- Pre-screening is based on documentary evidence
- Translation sample is reviewed and evaluated by staff translator or experienced contractor
- Test-taking open to all qualified candidates
- Of roughly 250 candidates who apply yearly, about 20% are found to meet our initial requirements and are invited to sit for the translation test

LS/T Testing Program

Translation test

- Proctored testing on LS premises, in most cases
- Equipment upgrades currently under way
- Waiver of candidate's right to challenge results
- Only print dictionaries and glossaries may be used
- No use of electronic dictionaries or translation software; no Internet access is permitted
- Uniform test passages: generally 3 texts of about 300 words each
- Uniform exam time: 4 hours

U.S. Department of State
Office of Language Services
Translating Division

English ⇒ Foreign Lang, Set 1
Legal/Commercial/Administrative
(278 words)

Please translate everything below the line.

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1. Registration of Food Facilities Interim Final Rule: The interim final rule requires the owner, operator, or agent in charge of a domestic or foreign facility that manufactures, processes, packs or holds "food" (as defined in the rule) for human or animal consumption in the U.S. to register with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) no later than December 12, 2003. In the rule, "facility" is defined as "any establishment, structure, or structures under one ownership at one general physical location, or, in the case of a mobile facility, traveling to multiple locations, that manufactures/processes, packs, or holds food for consumption in the United States," whether the food is produced domestically or abroad. Private residences of individuals are not facilities. FDA also is clarifying in the rule that a facility is not limited to one building, but can consist of several contiguous structures. The Bioterrorism Act exempts farms, restaurants, other retail food establishments, nonprofit food establishments in which food is prepared for or served directly to the consumer, and fishing vessels (with some exceptions) from the requirement to register. Foreign facilities that manufacture/process food are also exempt if food from those facilities undergoes further processing or packaging of a more than de minimis nature at another foreign facility.

2. The Bioterrorism Act requires a foreign facility to provide the name of its U.S. agent. The U.S. agent acts as a communication link between FDA and the foreign facility. The U.S. agent will be the person FDA contacts if an emergency occurs, unless the facility has identified a different emergency contact. The interim final rule specifically requests additional comments on the costs of maintaining a U.S. agent.

LS/T Testing Program

Non-discriminatory, impartial evaluation

- Each test is graded by two staff translators or experienced contractors using standardized evaluation criteria
- Test grading is double-blind to ensure impartiality
- The two evaluations then go to the Chief Translator for a final decision

LS/T Testing Program

Notification of Test Results

- Uniform notification after testing, usually within six weeks
- Pass rate: about 40%
- Retest options
- Background check

Linguistic Aspects of Translation Test Assessment

Translating Division

Office of Language Services

U.S. Department of State

Julia LaVilla-Nossova (nossovaje@state.gov)

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Target Text Evaluation

- Modality of the target text
- Stylistic characteristics of the target text
  - Adequate rendition of register
- Grammatical aspects of translation
  - Thematic/rhematic articulation (topic/comment relation)
- Erudition and cultural awareness

Modality

«Бармаглот»

Варкалось. Хливкие шорьки
Пырялись по наве,
И хрюкотали зелюки,
Как мюмзики в мове.

О, бойся Бармаглота, сын!
Он так свирлеп и дик!
А в глу́ше ры́мит исполин —
Злопастный Брандашмыг!

Но взял он меч, и взял он щит,
Высоких полон дум.
В глущобу путь его лежит
Под дерево Тумтум.

»Алиса в Зазеркалье», Перевод Дины Орловской

"**Jabberwocky**"

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

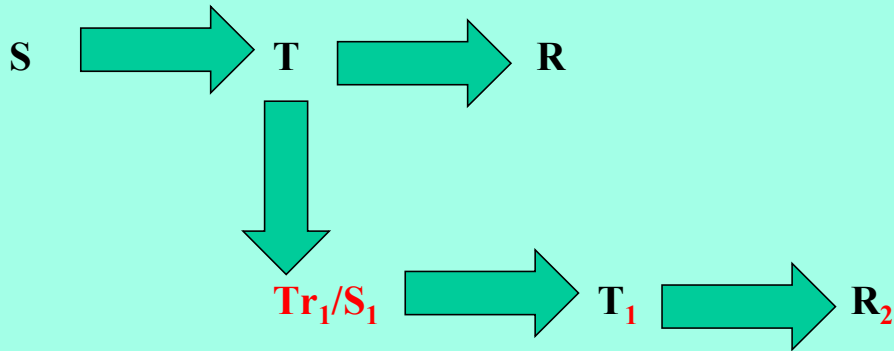from *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871)

Modality

Modality (*modalis* - modal, *modus* - method) is a semantic category expressing the attitude of a speaker to the content of his statement, purpose of his statement, and the relationship between the content of a statement and the reality.

- Modality can expressed through the use of grammatical and lexical means
  Special verb forms associated with various modes:
  - Indicative, imperative and conditional mode, as well as independent infinitive in Russian (От дохнуть бы!)
- Modal words:
  - Parenthesis and adverbs — кажется, пожалуй, возможно; *perhaps, likely, maybe, probably*;
  - Modal verbs:
    - *dare, can, may, must, should* and *ought;*
    - *dürfen, können, mögen,wollen, müssen, sollen;*
    - хочу, могу, должен, обязан (словами состояния: надо, можно и т. п.).
    - *vouloir, pouvoir, devoir, savoir*
- Intonation (in oral speech)

Communication Model of Translation

(Leipzig School, A. Neubert, O. Kade)

Language Function (as in math!):

$$S \longrightarrow T \longrightarrow R$$
$$\downarrow$$
$$Tr_1/S_1 \longrightarrow T_1 \longrightarrow R_2$$

What is the main purpose of communication?

Legend – S – sender of a message
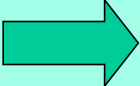**R – message recipient**
T – text
Tr - translator

E.V. Breus, *Theory and Practice of Translation from English into Russian*, Moscow, URAO, 2001

Definition of translation

- It is a process of interlingual and intercultural communication in the course of which a secondary "translated" text is generated on the basis of source text analysis performed by a translator. This secondary text replaces the source text in a new language and cultural environment.
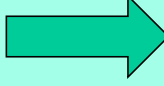
Communication Model of Translation
(Purpose or Function of Communication)

- The link S ⟹ T is hinged on the purpose or intent of communication:

This purpose may include the following:

- informing the R about fact of the surrounding world (denotative);
- trying to express S's attitude to information he relates (expressive);
- trying to check the channel of communication with the R (aimed at establishing actual contact);
- inducing action on the part of the R (giving out an instruction or command) (volition);
- emphasizing the use of certain language forms (poetic translation);
- relating information about the language of communication (metalinguistic);

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Communication Model of Translation

- The link T $\Longrightarrow$ R – reflects the final stage in the intralingual communication (within the same language). It shows how effective the communication was depending on:
    - what linguistic means was chosen by the S
    - background knowledge of the R (i.e. how well he is informed about the subject of communication).

Communication Model of Translation

- The link T $\longrightarrow$ Tr_1 of this communication scheme shows that a translator serves as a recipient of the source text and his role – which is impacted his view, personal preferences, taste, his familiarity with the subject etc. This is why people say that EACH TRANSLATOR OR INTERPRETER TRANSLATES HIMSELF!

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Communication Model of Translation

- **The link Tr_1/S_1 ➡ T_1 corresponds to the intralingual level link S ➡ T on the diagram. It is a key stage of the communicative process because the <u>communication intent of the source text sender (S)</u> forms the basis for comparison between the source language and the language that is used for translating.**

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Communication Model of Translation (cont.)

- At this stage of the communication process the goal of a translator is to find appropriate corresponding language, i.e. <u>lexical units and grammar units</u> that he can use in his language in order to preserve the intent of communication of the original text.

Communication Model of Translation (cont.)

- In the CMT, the notion of equivalence is primarily based on the equivalence of communication *intent or goal* and communication *effect*.
- At this point the relevant lexical and grammar transformation takes place – i.e. analogous means are used to accomplish the same intent – the same goal of communication. Translator's choices are driven by the linguistic means of the source text – its lexical and grammar units.

Communication Model of Translation

- The final link in the diagram T_1 ➡ R_2 signifies the attitude of the recipient (R_2) to the translated text (T_1).

Important tip: translation process implies comparing not only two different languages, but two different cultures. So in addition to reaching the communication goal, translator must provide the necessary cultural clarifications when cultural differences obstruct communication.

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Communication Model of Translation (conclusion)

- Translation is considered to be identical to its source (or "equivalent" to its source) if the <u>reaction of a foreign recipient</u> to the translated text is in all of its major points the same as the reaction of a recipient at the intraliguistic level (who receives text originating from the source in the same language). <u>Choice of linguistic means</u> – lexical units, grammar forms, modal verbs etc. is determined by the <u>main purpose of communication.</u>

Can you guess what communicative model is being used?

Grammatical Aspects of Translation

Exact translation in purely grammatical terms may be impossible due to differences in grammatical structure of the languages. It may violate combinatory and literary norms of a target language. In some cases, it may be damaging to its style. Therefore, even the most exact translation may require changes in word order or small additions and deviations from grammatical accuracy are quite normal and legitimate.

Grammatical Aspects of Translation

Three main cases of grammatical differences between source and target texts:

- Presence of elements that have no grammatical equivalent in the target language (e.g. rendering indefinite and definite articles and constructions with indefinite pronouns)

- Presence of elements in the target text that have no correspondence to the source language (grammatical aspect and various participial forms in Russian, diminutive and subjective opinion suffixes)

- Formally grammar elements of the source and target texts correspond to each other, however, their functions differ. This requires particular attention since the formally different from the original elements need to be used in order to provide correspondence of target text's meaning and style to the original.

The Importance of Using Grammar….

Glokaya kuzdra (Глокая куздра) is a reference to a phrase constructed from non-existent words in a grammatically proper way, similar to the English language phrases using the pseudoword "gostak". It was suggested by Russian linguist Lev Shcherba. The full phrase is: "Глóкая кýздра штéко будланýла бóкра и курдя́чит бокрёнка" (*Glokaya kuzdra shteko budlanula bokra i kurdyachit bokryonka*). In the phrase, all word stems (glok-, kuzdr-, shtek-, budl-, bokr-, kurd-) are meaningless, but all affixes are real, used in a grammatically correct way and — which is the point — provide enough semantics for the phrase to be a perceived description of some dramatic action with a specified plot but with unknown entities. A very rough English translation (considering no semantic information is available) could be: "The glocky kuzdra shteckly budled the bocker and kurdyaks the bockerling."

Shcherba used it in his lectures in linguistics to emphasize the importance of grammar in acquiring foreign languages. The phrase was popularized by Lev Uspensky in his popular science book *Word about Words (*«Слово о словах).[1]

Units of speech

- Speech vs language
- Statements (sentences that have been included in a specific communicative situation) are typically comprised of two parts:

  - new information (rheme)
  - old information (theme)

Theme, rheme, monorheme:
techniques for inverting sentences

Theme and Rheme

Compare the following sentences:

В комнату вошел мальчик.

В руках у него была книга.

Мальчик вошел в комнату.

Theme, rheme, monorheme:
techniques for inverting sentences

Monorhemes

- In 1922 a new leader arose in Britain.

  В 1922 году в Англии появился новый лидер. *(Reverse word order)*

- A change in the government's attitude became apparent at the beginning of this month.

  В начале месяца обозначились изменения в позиции правительства.

Monorhemes (cont.)

- Can be encountered in groups – not just as single words:

On this basis, the *Conference at Locarno was formally opened on October 4*. By the waters of this calm lake, *the delegates of Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and Italy have assembled.*

На этой основе 4 октября в Локарно была созвана конференция. На берегу тихого озера собрались делегаты Англии, Франции, Германии, Бельгии и Италии.

Monorhemes - conclusion

- Are distinguished by their sense of novelty

TRANSLATION RULE:

Having identified a monorheme in a sentence, use the reverse order of words to translate it – this would bring the subject of a sentence in Russian to the end of the sentence.

Theme, rheme, monorheme:
techniques for inverting sentences

Dirhemes

- Dirhemes are statements in which the theme (or "old" information) is linked to content in a previous sentence/statement and is a consequence of it.

- Translation of most of the dirhemes may require a number of translation transformations.

Theme, rheme, monorheme:
techniques for inverting sentences

Dirhemes

- **Subject of an English sentence is an actual adverbial modifier of place** (обстоятельство), object or attribute of a subject.

My tent/ sleeps/ four people.

В моей палатке /могут спать/четыре человека.

Translation into Russian represents the transformation that is called "conversive transformation."

Theme, rheme, monorheme:
techniques for inverting sentences

Dirhemes (cont.)

- **Subject – is the actual adverbial modifier of time** (обстоятельство времени)

The early post war years saw a reappraisal of values.

После войны произошла определенная переоценка ценност ей.

Dirhemes (cont.)

- **Subject is the actual adverbial modifier of purpose or manner** (обстоятельство цели или образа действия)

The avalanche destroyed several houses.

В результате схода лавины пострадало несколько зданий.

Dirhemes (cont.)

- **Subject is the actual object** (прямое, косвенное или предложное дополнение)

In this case, the equivalent Russian statement has the reverse order of words. The English subject is transformed into the object.

Dirhemes (cont.)

- The old man/ felt/ faint and sick.

  Старика /одолела/ слабость и дурнота.

- This /may have/ many reasons.

  Тому /может быть/ много причин.

- Now I /shall have/ a headache.

  Теперь /у меня/ разболится/ голова.

- A different stand/ was taken/ by France.

  Иную позицию заняла Франция.

Dirhemes (cont.)

- **Actual subject characterizes the grammatical subject:**

The second enemy /was/ youth and youth culture.

Вторым врагом/ были/ молодежь и связанная с ней субкультура.

Dirhemes (cont.)

- Dirhemes with formal subject (с формальным подлежащим) – frequently a pronoun – it, they, one and various nouns:

In 2001 the orchestra made its first recordings.

В *2001* г. были сделаны первые записи.

Nominalization

- This tendency is more expressed in Russian than in English. In Russian verbal nouns are typical for the journalistic writing

Transit verb:

Siberia's iron and steel industry is expanding from West to East.

Развитие черной металлургии в Сибири идет с запада на восток.

(English predicate " to expand" becomes a subject in the form of a noun in Russian)

Nominalization (cont.)

- Contacts are <u>being expanded</u>.

  <u>Раширение</u> контактов продолжается.

- The Rotschilds <u>entered</u> the scene of big business during the last years of Napoleonic wars.

  <u>Появление</u> Ротшильдов на сцене большого бизнеса совпало с завершающим этапом наполеоновских войн.

Transformation dependent on the predicate

- In linguistics – relation of the " doer" to his " action", " object" to " action", " possessor" to " possessed objects", " object" to its " property" etc. is called the " predicate".

Книгу положили на стол (предикат действия)

Книга лежит на столе (предикат состояния)

Я вижу книгу на столе (предикат восприятия)

Иван его уважал (предикат отношения)

Replacing the predicate of state with the predicate of action

- He <u>was late</u>.

  Он <u>опоздал</u>.

- He <u>became the ally</u> of a boy named Aubrey Mills.

  Он <u>подружился</u> с мальчиком по имени Обри Миллз.

- We are <u>giving more rights</u> to local government bodies.

  <u>Расширяются права</u> местных органов власти.

- A new economic system has to be urgently built, since the old one <u>no longer works</u>.

  Поскольку старая экономическая система <u>утратила жизнеспособность</u>, новую надо, не откладывая, создавать.

Generalization or narrowing down the meaning

Particularly common with verbs: be, have, get, take, give, make, do, come, go.

- Old birds are not to be caught with chaff.

  Старого воробья на мякине не проведешь.

- There was yellow weed on the line.

  Леску опутали желтые водоросли.

- The fish was a little too far from the boat.

  Рыба плыла все еще слишком далеко от лодки.

Style

Style is the main element of speech. In essence, it is analogous to its "clothes" which tell a lot about the text and how it functions.

There are **four functional styles** in the Russian language:

- **scientific** (articles, dissertations etc.) - abundant terminology which may be frequently unknown
- **official** (laws, reports and memoranda etc.) - typically have a lot of verbal nouns, long sentences, direct order of words, accuracy of information rendition, broad use of clichés
- **journalistic** (media, magazines, news channels etc.) – targeted at shaping people's opinions and impacting their attitude to various issues
- **literary** (characterized by high expressivity and use of rich vocabulary, metaphors and other figures of speech – Love's Labor's Lost/ «Бесплодные усилия любви»)
- **colloquial** (personal blogs, advertisement, social networks)

Being Mindful of Cultural and Situational Context

- Simple question: Who is Billie Holiday?

- Another simple question: How would you translate the word "writer" into Russian?

Billie Holiday

Common Errors

- Mistranslating words and phrases
- Adding content that is not present in the original
- Omitting content that is present the original
- Excessively literal or excessively loose translation
- Use of ambiguous wording
- Incorrect grammar, punctuation, spelling
- Use of inappropriate style, tone and register
- Incorrect or non-idiomatic usage of target language
- Inappropriate terminology
- Inconsistency in translating terms
- Miscopying dates, figures

Broad Grouping of Errors at the OLS

- Substantive errors (less than 5)
  - When the meaning of the target text is significantly different from the source and contains factual errors or mistranslations
- None-substantive errors (approximately10)
  - The meaning of the source text is not distorted, but the choice of equivalents is not optimal.

What is " Substantive" ?

Substantive differences are differences in *meaning* between the two texts being compared, i.e., disparities that are **essential**, **real**, and **of major or practical importance** – *particularly if they affect the rights and obligations of the Parties.*

Substantive Errors

- **Mistranslation**
- **Addition**
- **Omission**
- **Ambiguity**
- **Grammar**
- **Modal mayhem: problems with modal verbs (shall, should, may, must, can, etc.)**
- **Terminology**

Non-Substantive Errors

- **Paraphrasing: should use official names**
- **Inconsistency**
- **Differences in numbering schemes**
- **Misspelling**
- **Formatting**
- **Too literal, or other style/register concerns**

Is anything wrong with this translation? **What? Where? When? How?**

Examples of Common Mistakes
(in a R>E translation)

- Russian: [context: Russia supports all possible measures to ensure compliance with Security Council resolutions in Iraq; however, it is opposed to any double standards.] Под возможными мерами мы понимаем лишь те, которые вписываются в рамки Устава ООН…

- Translation (1): Of the possible measures, we recognize only those that are enshrined within the UN Charter…

- Translation (2): We acknowledge as possible only those measures that fit within the bounds of the UN Charter…

- Reviewed English translation: By possible measures, we mean only those that fall within the UN Charter… [with corrected mistranslations]

Examples of Common Mistakes (cont.)

- This sentence follows Item above] Вся предыдущая практика существования «беспилотных зон» наглядно продемонстрировала необоснованность аргументации, которая выдвигалась в их защиту.
- Translation (1): All the prior practice of the existence of "no-fly zones" has demonstrated at a glance the baselessness of the arguments which have led in their defense.
- Translation (2): All prior implementation of "no-fly" zones has clearly shown the groundlessness of arguments put forward in their defense.
- Reviewed English translation: All prior experience with the existence of "no-fly" zones has graphically demonstrated the groundlessness of the arguments advanced in support of them. [with corrected mistranslations]

Examples of Common Mistakes (cont.)

- Russian: Все это связано, как мы понимаем, с введением так называемых «новых расширенных правил патрулирования», а фактически – с осуществляемой сейчас линией на использование вооруженной силы для оказания еще более жесткого давления на иракский режим.

- Translation (1): All this is related as we understand into the introduction of so called "new broadened rules of patrolling and in reality with the line currently in effect on the use of armed forces to exert even greater pressure on the Iraqi regime.

- Translation (2): All this is connected to the introduction of so-called "new and expanded patrolling guidelines" but in reality is the realization of a policy to use armed forces for the exertion of even greater pressure on the Iraqi regime.

- Reviewed English translation: As we see it, all this stems from the introduction of the so-called "new expanded rules of engagement – and in reality from a policy, now being implemented, of putting even heavier pressure on the Iraqi regime by force of arms. [corrections of incorrect terminology, mistranslation]

Examples of Common Mistakes (cont.)

- Russian: [context: Russian opposition to no-fly zones in Iraq] Они были установлены односторонним решением, произвольно, без санкции Совета Безопасности -- иными словами, вразрез со сложившейся системой поддержания международной безопасности.

- Translation (1): These [no-fly zones] were established by unilaterally-made decisions, arbitrarily, without sanctions from the Security Council – in other words, outside of the established system of support for international security.

- Translation (2): They were instituted unilaterally and arbitrarily, without approval from the Security Council; in other words, in contravention of the system already in place to help maintain international security.

- Reviewed English translation: They were established by unilateral decision, arbitrarily, without the sanction of the Security Council – in other words, in a manner at variance with the established system of safeguarding international security. [corrected mistranslation]

Examples of Common Mistakes (cont.)

- Russian: Очевидно однако, что любые боевые действия, -- какое бы «точечное оружие» не использовалось, -- неизбежно приводят к жертвам среди мирного населения, разрушению гражданских объектов и тем самым ухудшают и без того тяжелые жизненные условия тех, кого они якобы предназначены защищать.

- Translation (1): It is clear, however, that any military actions, regardless of the "surgical weaponry" that may be used, inevitably lead to victims among the civilian population, the destruction of civilian facilities, and the worsening of living conditions (already difficult without the aforementioned) of the civilians these actions are supposedly intended to protect.

- Translation (2): It is obvious, however, that any military actions, regardless of how "precision-guided" the weaponry used made be – will inescapably result in casualties among the the civilian population and the destruction of civil infrastructure, thereby worsening the already difficult living conditions of those they are supposedly intended to protect.

- Reviewed English translation: It is clear, however, that any military actions, regardless of what "surgical weaponry" might be used, inevitably lead to casualties among the civilian population and to the destruction of civilian facilities, and thereby exacerbate the already dire living conditions of those whom they are supposedly intended to protect. [with correction of addition, omission, terminology]

Examples of Common Mistakes (cont.)

- Russian: Причины слабости американца …-- это признаки экономической рецессии в США,ожидания того, что Федеральная резервная система будет и дальше понижать учетную ставку, нежелание Европейского ЦБ идти на смягчение монетарной политики, а также рост цен на нефть и сырье.

- Translation (1): The reasons for the dollar's weakness …are the signs of economic recession in the USA in anticipation that the federal reserve system of the USA will further lower the discount rate, which is undesirable to the European Central Bank to go with the softening of monetary policies and also the increases for oil and commodities.

- Translation (2): The reasons for the American dollar's weakness are on everyone's lips: this is a sign of economic recession in the U.S., anticipation of the U.S. Federal Reserve System further lowering interest rates and the refusal of the European Central Bank to ease its monetary policy, as well as increase in the price of oil and raw materials.

- Reviewed English translation: The causes of the weak dollar are …signs of economic recession in the U.S., expectations that the U.S. Federal Reserve System will continue to lower the discount rate, and the reluctance of the European Central Bank to ease its monetary policy, as well as rising oil and commodity prices. [corrected mistranslations]

Examples of Common Mistakes (cont.)

- Russian: [context: Resulting tensions are at odds with active efforts the UN is making] с целью вывести из тупика иракскую проблему политическими методами.

- Translation (1): …with the goal of pulling out of the impasse of the Iraq problem with political methods.

- Translation (2): …with the goal of resolving by political means the impasse the Iraq issue is currently facing.

- Reviewed English translation: …with the goal of ending the impasse over the Iraq problem by political means. [non-idiomatic usage, mistranslation]

Examples of Common Mistakes (cont.)

- Russian: Длительность взрыва будет составлять около микросекунды, но мощность – до 20 гигаватт.
- Translation (1): The length of each explosion will consist of roughly microseconds, but the power is up to 20 gigawatts.
- Translation (2): The explosion will be roughly 20 microseconds in duration, but is output can up to 20 gigawatts.
- Reviewed English translation: Each explosion will last roughly a microsecond, but the power can be as much as 20 gigawatts. [mistranslations]

Examples of Common Mistakes (cont.)

- Russian: Так, по словам финансового аналитика FxTeam Александра Купцикевича, убытки от списания ипотечных закладных в США могут составить более $400 млрд., а объем сделок с недвижимостью в США сократился за год на 19%.
- Translation (1): Thus, in the words of the FxTeam financial analyst Aleksander Kuptsikevich, losses from mortgage write-offs in the USA could amount to $400 billion, and the volume of real estate transactions in the USA decreased in a year by 19%.
- Translation (2): Thus, in the words of FxTeam financial analyst Aleksandr Kuptsikevich, the losses from writing off mortgage loans in the U.S. may surpass $400 billion, with the number of real estate transactions in the USA decreasing by 19% this year.
- Reviewed English translation: …According to FxTeam financial analyst Aleksandr Kuptsikevich, losses from mortgage write-offs in the U.S. could exceed $400 billion, and real estate transactions are down 19% this year.[omission, excessively literal translation, style]

OFFICE OF LANGUAGE SERVICES
TRANSLATION DIVISION
TRANSLATING TEST RATING SHEET

LS Number:			
Source Language:		Target Language:	
Time Test Began:		Time Completed:	

Please evaluate the translation test using the error codes listed in the attached table.

1) **Mark all the errors** (circle or underline) directly on the test passages.

2) **Label the errors using the error codes**. Please add the total number of major errors and minor errors found in the translating test and use that total to determine your rating of the test.

3) **EXPLAIN WHY A PARTICULAR ERROR IS MAJOR OR MINOR**. Use an extra sheet of paper, if necessary.

4) Finally, please **write your overall comments** in the space provided.
ALL RATING OFFICERS MUST SUMMARIZE THEIR OVERALL REACTION TO THE TEST IN THAT SPACE AND MUST JUSTIFY – USING SPECIFIC EXAMPLES FROM THE TEXT – WHY A PARTICULAR GRADE IS BEING ISSUED. IF THIS SECTION IS NOT FILLED OUT, THE REVIEW WILL BE RETURNED TO BE COMPLETED PROPERLY. Please use an additional sheet of paper if necessary.

Total Major Errors:		Total Minor Errors:	

Pass / Fail (Check one)　　**PASS**　　　　**FAIL**

If Fail, Retest? (Check one)　　**YES**　　　　**NO**

If Retest, # of months:

Evaluator: *Please print and sign*	Name (printed):	Signature:

Date of Evaluation: _____

Div. Chief Signature: _____

TABLE OF TRANSLATION ERRORS

Error Code	Error Name	Major Errors	Minor Errors	Rating Officer's Specific Comments
MT	Mistranslation			
AD	Addition			
O	Omission			
LT	Too literal			
GE	Global error			
AM	Ambiguity			
G	Grammar			
P	Punctuation			
SP	Spelling			
ST	Style			
T	Terminology			
I	Inconsistency			
F	Format			
	TOTAL:			

Major Errors

Mistranslations, additions, and omissions that significantly alter the meaning or intent of the source language text are major errors.

Minor Errors

Other errors are generally counted as minor, but can become major if they alter the meaning or intent of the source language text.

Overall Comments by Rating Officer: (To be completed by ALL rating officers)

Error Code	Error Name	Definition
MT	Mistranslation	Inaccurately translating from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL)
AD	Addition	Adding to the translation what is not found in the source language.
O	Omission	The failure to include all units of meaning found in the SL text. Includes the annotation "Not in the Dictionary."
LT	Too literal	The tendency to translate the SL text by following too closely the word order of the SL text, thereby compromising the integrity of the TL text and either stripping it of meaning or obscuring the meaning.
GE	Global error	The recurrence of one or more errors in a TL text.
AM	Ambiguity	Ambiguity occurs when an idea, clearly expressed in the source language, is rendered in an unnecessarily obscure, vague, or imprecise manner in the target language or lends itself to more than one interpretation.
G	Grammar	The failure to use idiomatic sentence structure and the failure to apply the rules of grammar. Includes word order, agreement of subject, verb, noun, and pronoun, proper gender, etc.
P	Punctuation	The failure to use punctuation correctly.
SP	Spelling	Self-explanatory.
ST	Style	Correct and idiomatic usage of the target language, including usage and register. In particular, candidates are expected to use prepositions correctly and idiomatically; to reproduce the register of the SL text, i.e., to use appropriate language and to capture the tone of the SL text; and to avoid anachronistic or culturally inappropriate expressions. If the SL text is characterized by a distinctive manner of expression (flowery, staccato, pedantic, conversational, etc.), this should be reflected in the translation, insofar as this is possible in the TL. Awkward renderings that obscure the meaning may be penalized.
T	Terminology	Failure to choose the proper term required by the context. Inclusion of more than one option would be considered a minor error, provided non of the options distorts substantially the meaning of the original.
I	Inconsistency	The failure to use the same word or term in the TL to translate one that is used repeatedly and uniformly throughout the SL text, particularly when the word or term in question is part of a title. Inconsistency also means a lack of uniformity in the TL text that is unwarranted or that leads to confusion, ambiguity, or obscurity.

MOLINK: Testing Presidential Translators

Dr. Jason Strudler

Defense Language Institute-Washington

Interagency Language Roundtable

Translation & Interpretation / Testing Committee Meeting

31 May 2019

Disclaimer

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Introduction

- **About myself:**
    - Associate Professor of Russian Translation, Defense Language Institute-Washington (Fall 2017-present)
    - One of two instructors for the MOLINK Presidential Translator Training Program

- Today's focus:
    - How we evaluate the mission-readiness of prospective Presidential Translators
    - How the goals (and therefore parameters) of our assessments reflect the unique qualities of the MOLINK mission

MOLINK Overview

- **MOLINK:**
  - Moscow-Washington Direct Communications Link
  - Founded 31 Aug 1963
  - Mission: "To provide a permanent, rapid, reliable and private means by which the Heads of the Government of the United States of America and the Russian Federation may communicate directly to reduce the risk of outbreak of nuclear war"

MOLINK Training Program Overview

- **MOLINK Training Program:**
  - Purpose: To assess, support, and train Presidential Translators before & during their work at the MOLINK office
  - Course length: 10 weeks, 4 hours/day, 5 days/week, 4 hours of HW/day
  - Course format: one-on-one instruction
  - Course emphasis: teaching translation skills & vocabulary related to military, diplomatic, political & historical topics
  - Skills trained: written translation, sight translation, gisting
  - The course begins w/ a pre-training assessment & ends with an Interagency Assessment Panel

Pre-Training Testing

- **Structure:**
  - Section 1 tests use of declension, conjugation, participles & verbal aspect, + ability to map sentences & overall familiarity w/ grammatical concepts
  - Section 2 tests translation skills & English language usage

- **Goals:**
  - To gauge trainee readiness for an intensive translation course
  - To identify weaknesses not revealed by the DLPT
  - To determine whether the trainee requires further instruction before the core course begins

Post-Training Testing (1)

- **Interagency Assessment Panel:**
  - Follows the completion of the 10-week MOLINK course
  - Panelists: DLI-W instructors + specialists from other agencies
  - Assesses the performance of the trainee in written and sight translation

- **Goal:**
  - To determine whether the trainee has achieved the required level of professional proficiency to allow for successful performance of the duties of a Presidential Translator

Post-Training Testing (2)

- **Pre-Panel Activities:**
  - The trainee has 5 hours to translate 2 texts (3-4 range) totaling ~1000 words
  - The panelists receive the trainee's translations & prepare questions/comments
  - The panelists receive a set of sight translation texts of varying difficulty to review
- **Panel Activities:**
  - Discussion of the written translations w/ the trainee
  - Sight translations & gisting exercises
  - Evaluation & vote on whether the trainee has met the requirements to be a Presidential Translator
  - Recommendations for further instruction if necessary

Unique Aspects of Testing

- **Student Proficiency:**
  - Since the course is only 10 weeks, the trainee cannot be expected to improve in all modalities
  - Our assessment focuses on proficiency in specific skill sets & discipline-specific themes instead of overall proficiency
- **Job Specificity:**
  - Presidential Translators must be able to provide rapid summaries
  - Our assessment treats sight translation & gisting as no less important that written translation
- **Post-Assessment Outcomes:**
  - Additional training is proposed if the trainee does not pass
  - Passing does not equal the end of instruction: after the panel, the trainee will begin to receive sustainment training