

Chapter 14

Evaluation in Specialized Translation Teaching: A New Method for Grading Scientific and Technical Translation Compulsory Activities

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ABSTRACT

The need to create and implement fair and precise evaluation scales in Specialized Translation subjects is a current and controversial issue within translation pedagogy. In this chapter, a scale model to be used for the evaluation of different translation-related assignments in Scientific and Technical Translation subjects is presented. The scale takes into account most aspects discussed both by teachers and scholars as an attempt to minimize work and offer an exact, easy-to-use, and fast tool for Translation teachers. Firstly, the chapter offers a general overview on the evaluation of translations, particularly those made from scientific and technical texts in an educational context. Secondly, it deals with the authors' experience as Specialized Translation teachers and the advantages and inconveniences stemmed from the evaluation scales implemented so far. Thirdly, the chapter details the authors' evaluation scale proposal and how it is implemented in their classes, and finally, it offers some specific examples and some recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Scientific and Technical Translation is a branch of specialized translation presenting very specific characteristics. It is a text genre in which a high degree of terminological difficulty has a key role,

especially in texts of a high specialization that are written by and intended for scientists and experts, who want to reach out and expand both knowledge and expertise. By contrast, general scientific and technical texts are aimed at informing all type of audiences about a specific issue straightforwardly.

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Scientific and technical translators need to count on a broad comprehension and understanding of the topic being treated in the text, whether it is about Industrial Engineering, Obstetrics, Molecular Biology, or Veterinary Science, all of them written in high degree of specialization, primarily when the text addressees are usually specialists and experts. Apart from mastering scientific and technical knowledge, translators are asked to recognize typical syntactical structures in scientific and technical texts, such as clear and objective sentences which often repeat words or phrases. They are required to control register and are asked to be as concise, precise, and objective as possible, according to the source text. They need to detect the possible presence of false friends, particularly in medical texts and especially from English, which is considered the *lingua franca* of medicine. Besides, scientific and technical translators should control the appearance of abbreviations, acronyms, or specialized terms in the text. Translators who have specialized in this branch of translation definitely need to sort out all these translation problems and at the same master scientific or technical knowledge about specific issues treated in the texts, whether they are general or specialized.

However, professional and pedagogical contexts cannot be compared, so it should be considered a normal process to make some sort of mistakes in the first translations of students. In an educational situation, students need to make mistakes, e.g. to mix up some similar terms with important but subtle differences to be taken into account, to introduce subjective elements in the text, to make some calques of expressions or words from the original language, or to translate acronyms that do not need any translation or vice versa, in order to finally achieve the lexical precision that is required in scientific and technical professional translators.

Therefore, evaluation in Scientific and Technical Translation subjects should take into consideration all the possible situations that Translation and

Interpreting students can face during the course, once they have to translate specialized texts. On the one hand, a certain degree of exactitude should be considered to evaluate the precision of terms and expressions used in the translation, as well as syntactical structures, but on the other hand it is also important to find a balance between this accuracy and the subjectivity also applied in translation assessments and evaluations.

Indeed, the search for an accurate and fair evaluation model has always been in the spotlight of researchers. A good assessment does not depend only on the decisions that a teacher may take, but also on the specific needs of the subject being taught and the assignment characteristics, as teachers evaluate differently language, interpretation, and translation subjects. In the same way, some clear divergences in the evaluation of general translation in comparison with specialized translation are observed, especially because general text translation is often taught during the first cycle of the Translation and Interpretation curriculum, and specialized texts are translated during the last two years. Finally, translation subjects including course papers cannot be compared with those based only in periodical deliveries. For instance, when the assignment characteristics differ in extension and form of delivery, there is a need to use different assessment models—even in the same subject—to ensure the highest quality of the whole evaluation. That is the case of specialized translation subjects, in which a single model seems to be imprecise in some activities according to the authors' experience.

The concern about getting a fair evaluation system is beyond writing a single number or letter as a mark at the top of students' activities. Teachers need to find a fair and easy method to assess all activities included in the same course or subject. Evaluation, as translations, must also be as precise as possible.

The main goal of the chapter is to show a new method to evaluate Scientific and Technical Translation subjects, regardless of the specific

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