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Translation projects — General guidance

Projets de traduction — Lignes directrices générales



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

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- an ISO Publicly Available Specification (ISO/PAS) represents an agreement between technical experts in an ISO working group and is accepted for publication if it is approved by more than 50 % of the members of the parent committee casting a vote;
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An ISO/PAS or ISO/TS is reviewed after three years in order to decide whether it will be confirmed for a further three years, revised to become an International Standard, or withdrawn. If the ISO/PAS or ISO/TS is confirmed, it is reviewed again after a further three years, at which time it must either be transformed into an International Standard or be withdrawn.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO/TS 11669 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Terminology and other language and content resources*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Terminographical and lexicographical working methods*.

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Introduction

This Technical Specification reflects the variety of projects that translation service providers (TSPs) carry out. It provides guidance concerning best practices for all phases of a translation project. It will also be useful to institutions that train and educate translators. It is not meant to compete with current regional and national standards, but is intended to improve communication among all relevant stakeholders in a translation project, including the persons requesting the translation service, those providing the service and those who make use of the resulting translation product. It is based in part on translation service standards adopted in Canada^[7], China^[8] ^[9], Europe^[5] and the United States^[6].

An organizing principle of this Technical Specification is the importance of structured specifications in translation projects (as elaborated in Clauses 6 and 7). A system is described for making decisions about how translation projects are to be carried out. Those decisions — project specifications — then become a resource for both the requester (the party that requests a translation product, sometimes called the client or customer) and the translation service provider throughout all phases of a translation project. Translation project specifications can be attached to a legally binding contract to define the work to be done. In the absence of a contract, they can be attached to a purchase order or other document supporting the request. Project specifications can be developed and used both within and outside commercial customer-vendor relationships.

A basic and implicit translation project specification is that the target content be readable in the target language and correspond in some way to the source content. However, the nature of the correspondence between the source and target contents will vary according to the needs of the project, as determined by the project specifications.

In practice, requesters do not always provide project specifications. However, that is not best practice. Requesters and TSPs should work together to determine project specifications. Those who do so are more likely to be satisfied with both the translation project and the final translation product. When both requesters and TSPs agree on project specifications, the quality of a translation — from a workflow and final delivery perspective — can be determined by the degree to which the target content adheres to the predetermined specifications. All parties involved in the production of a translation product should have access to the necessary project specifications.

After the requester receives the final translation product, the role of the project specifications does not end; they are the starting point for all assessments, both qualitative and quantitative. Any assessment standards would therefore benefit from taking into account the system of structured specifications presented in this Technical Specification. Keeping the translation product and the project specifications together provides a uniform basis for assessment. The project specifications can be used to guide assessments made by either the TSP or the end user. The use of the same specifications by all parties avoids assessment based on personal opinions of how source content should be translated. In some cases, the specifications themselves will be found to be unclear or ill-advised. In other cases, it will be determined that the specifications were not followed. In all cases, the use of project specifications can improve communication within the document production chain and promote ongoing improvement.

In summary, quality translation *projects* and quality translation *products* result from developing and following appropriate project *specifications*.