

# The speck in your brother's eye – the beam in your own

Quality management in translation and revision

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## Abstract

Global and national changes have resulted in new requirements for quality management and quality control in translation. International standards like the recent European Quality Standard for Translation Services, EN 15038 (2006), have been developed in order to give clients an assurance that they are receiving high-quality translation work. According to some of these standards, target texts have to be revised at least twice or, ideally, three times by others than the translator him/herself. Revision and revision processes have also come more into focus in TS research. According to Gile (2005), who has developed a mathematical formula that defines quality as the balanced sum of quality parameters, revision tasks are usually carried out by experienced translators. In two empirical longitudinal studies at CBS, the relation between translation competence and revision competence of students and professional translators was investigated. The question posed was: “are the good translators also the good revisers?” In this article, quality parameters and revision processes are described and shown in models. The question is raised whether it would be an advantage to establish special training in revision, parallel to the translator training.

**Keywords:** quality assessment, revision, self-revision, translation competence, translator training, experience

## 1 Introduction

Daniel Gile was one of the first to work with quality assessment in translation and interpreting, and he talked openly about errors and omissions, and about a distinction between “linguistic errors” and “translation errors” (Gile 1994: 46f). He also carried out empirical studies on the perception of errors (Gile: 1985, 1995, 1999a, 1999b), especially with respect to interpreting. In Gile (1995: 31), he described the difficulties involved in defining the concept of “quality” and (ibid.: 38) he gives examples of many different perceptions of quality. In Gile (2005: 60), he proposes a mathematical formula that defines quality as a sum of individual, pragmatic, text internal and text external factors:

$$Q(T, c, e) = \sum [p_i(c, e) \text{ éval}(FT_i) + p'_j p(c, e) \text{ éval}(FET_j)]$$

where

$Q(T, c, e)$  refers to the quality  $Q$  of the translation  $T$  as it is perceived by the evaluator  $e$  under conditions  $c$

$FT_i$  where  $i = 1, 2, 3 \dots$  are text-internal factors

FET<sub>j</sub> where  $j = 1, 2, 3 \dots$  are text-external factors

$p_i$  and  $p'_j$  are the respective relevance of the text-internal and the text-external factors in relation to the evaluator's individual preferences in the given situation. And "éval" means evaluation. Using this formula, each of the factors can be evaluated as positive, negative or neutral.

Additionally, Gile (ibid.: 62) presents a formula for an inter-subjective or collective assessment, which is the arithmetic average ("moyenne") of the individual evaluations:

$$Q \text{ moyenne} = 1/n \sum Q(T, c, e)$$

In (2005 : 66), he says however:

Enfin, chaque réviseur et chaque client peut avoir ses propres préférences textuelles. Il est donc difficile de parler avec précision d'une qualité de la traduction dans l'absolu. L'évaluation sera toujours en partie subjective.

*My translation:* Ultimately, every reviser and every client may have his/her special textual preferences. That is why judging the precise quality of a text in absolute terms is difficult. The evaluation will always be, in part, subjective.

According to Gile (2005: 53) the reviser is usually an experienced translator who reads and corrects the translations and who improves them. Gile (ibid.: 67) talks about translators revising each others' translations and he points out that the process of revision can be a source of frustration, especially in cases where the translator disagrees with the revisions.

Actually, such frustrations led me to start teaching revision courses at the CBS, in 1983. The original goal of this training was to protect future professional translators by strengthening their assertiveness. Some of the professionals I interviewed in the eighties had complained that they always lacked arguments to explain and justify changes when they had to revise the texts of their colleagues.

In the revision courses and exams at the CBS, which always took place in the final semester of their Masters' degree course, the students were asked to revise defect, authentic, already published, non-literary target texts which are used in everyday life in Denmark, for example texts for foreign tourists. (Hansen 1996). Criticism and revision of translated texts always constituted about 25% of the translator training.

### *1.1 Two longitudinal studies*

In 2003, I began carrying out experiments with the students, the first *students' longitudinal study*, because I wondered why some of the good translators among them proved to be poor revisers and vice versa.

I am currently working on a second *professionals' longitudinal study* "From student to expert", an empirical study with 40 former CBS students who are professionals today. The *same* sample group participated, 10 years ago, in an empirical project on profiles, translation processes and products, where I investigated sources of disturbances in translation processes (Hansen 2006). In 2006/2007, I contacted them again and visited them at their workplaces. Their profiles, translation processes and translation products are now being investigated again. The objective of this study is the development and improvement of quality standards after graduation from the CBS. The methods

used are both within-subject variance across situations (as students and experts), but the subjects' results are also compared with each other.

According to the results of a questionnaire and interviews with all of them:

- 14 of the experts work today as professional translators in institutions, organizations, companies, translation agencies or as freelancers, and 3 of these work mostly as professional revisers;
- 8 hold management positions;
- 13 work with marketing, consulting or as personal assistants;
- 5 have become teachers.

So far, 28 of the 40 earlier subjects also have participated in the new experiments – including 8 bilinguals. As the professional translators often have to revise each others' work, their *revision competence* was also tested again.

## 2 Theories and models

Translators and revisers need grounding in translation theory. As to the evaluation of translations, Koller (1979: 216ff) points out that translation criticism and translation assessment should be carried out with the translator's and the evaluator's theoretical orientation and translation norms in mind, and that norms and situations vary and change.

### 2.1 Translation theory

Especially the *essence* of at least some complementary theories or different important theoretical approaches is indispensable: these could, for example, include Koller's theory of equivalence, (1979, 2001) and the Skopos theory developed by Reiss/Vermeer (1984). Being confronted with different positions and assumptions – especially the functional approach in relation to the theory of equivalence – raises awareness as to different norms, expectations and quality criteria. Theory gives translators and revisers a basis for translation decisions and the terminology to argue for corrections and changes.

According to the experts in the professionals' longitudinal study, the theoretical discussions we had 10 years ago about issues like equivalence or adequacy, acceptability, grammaticality, functionality and skopos have proved to be very useful in professional life and, they say, have made them more flexible than they might otherwise have been. This is also the case for those who do not translate today.

However, professional translators do not only profit from translation theory, but also from knowledge and terminology relating to linguistics, pragmatics, and stylistics. Some (4) of the 14 professional translators who work with revision said in the interviews that theory and a professional classification of errors, based on theory, is helpful in situations where revision becomes problematic because their colleagues, whose work they have to revise, are rather sensitive to corrections of their work.

*Models* like the CBS process model (Hansen 2006: 270), Hönig's Flussdiagramm (1995: 51) and Gile's Sequential model (1995 and 2005: 102) are useful. The models of Hönig and Gile can be used to complement each other. They train students on the one hand to think prospectively and in a

skopos-oriented way (Hönig's Flussdiagramm), and on the other hand to be oriented retrospectively, monitoring their production (Gile's Sequential model). In the revision courses at the CBS, Gile's Sequential model has recently proved to be especially useful for the revision of translations with TMS, when translators need to check whether already translated, proposed segments fit logically with the rest of the text.

The CBS Model (see appendix), which is based on the theory of functional translation with the addition of important ideas from Koller (see Hansen (1995: 88ff, 2006: 270)), has proved to be a useful guideline for the entire translation process, from the analysis of the translation brief and the ST to the evaluation and revision of the TT.

## 2.2 Revision theory

Both Mossop 2007b and Künzli (2007: 116) give an overview of some recent empirical studies of revision. Brunette 2000 discusses key concepts specific to translation assessment and establishes (ibid: 170ff) a terminology of translation quality assessment where she defines five assessment procedures in relation to the purpose of the assessment. She divides between *Translation quality assessment (TQA)*, usually used to check the degree to which professional standards are met without contact to the translator, *Quality control*, a monolingual or bilingual revision with contact to the translator on request, *Pragmatic revision*, where there is no contact between the translator and the reviser, *Didactic revision*, which is primarily intended to help translators hone their skills, and *Fresh look*, reading the target text as an independent text.

Mossop's guidebook, (2001/2007a), describes principles and procedures for editors and revisers of non-literary texts. Apart from a discussion of important questions and problems with revision tasks and processes, he provides a glossary of editing and revision terms.

Empirical studies of *revision processes* have been carried out by Krings 2001 and Brunette et al. 2005. In both studies, unilingual and comparative revision was compared, with the result that comparative revision yielded a better target text. Krings 2001 used TAPs and video recording of unilingual revisions of a machine translation. There was no access to the ST and the study showed that without the possibility to go back to the ST, serious errors remain uncorrected. Brunette et al. 2005 compared the results of unilingual revisions with comparative revisions of the same translations a few days later by the same subjects, professional translators. She also concludes that the comparative revision gave better results.

Künzli (2007a, 2007b) has worked with many of the typical problems of revision. He carried out empirical research with TAPs in revision processes, where he investigated the "external revision", i.e. the changes actually made, and "internal revision", which is what the reviser formulates mentally during the revision process. In Künzli (2007b: 46f), using TAPs he also analyzed the ethical dilemmas and loyalty conflicts between the different parties involved in translation and revision projects, and especially the "conflict between the economic demand for speed and the ethical demand for thoroughness, reliability or quality".

In the German-speaking area of Translation Studies, much research has been done on *quality management* and on *classification and grading of errors*. Some examples are Reiss 1971; House 1997; Stolze 1997; Nord 1998; Gerzymisch-Arbogast 2001; Schmitt 1998, 2001, and recently

Mertin (2006), who discusses different criteria and classifications of errors and their application to professional translation in the business world.

### 3 Concepts of quality

Translation quality is obviously a central issue in the many national and international standards, norms and certificates by associations, governments and institutions addressing translation processes and products, such as the ISO, DIN, ASTM, SAE standards and lately the EN-15038 standard. The title of the recent CIUTI FORUM 2008 was “Enhancing Translation Quality: Ways, Means, Methods”. The informal definitions of the concept of quality are various, e.g.:

- Quality is a question of *individual perception*. Quality is defined according to idiosyncratic parameters or criteria. Everyone has his/her own definition of quality and the definitions can vary considerably.
- Quality is a *cultural issue*. Expectations as to quality can vary in different countries and cultures and can be seen as a question of social and political appropriateness.
- Quality is *meeting the clients' needs* – it is the *clients' satisfaction*. For many organizations or companies like, for example, the European Commission, the UN and Daimler (CIUTI-Forum 2008), a main indicator of quality is the clients' reaction, his/her degree of satisfaction and especially the number of complaints from clients. It is regarded as crucial to gain the confidence of the clients and to be aware of all the reactions in order to maintain a good reputation. The client-related concept of quality is followed up by regular evaluations by the service providers, with surveys showing the consumers' perception of the quality of the translation services. A model of such a survey can be seen in, for example, Mertin (2006: 285).
- Quality is *fulfilment of the skopos*. Quality is seen as the fulfilment of the purpose of the translation. It is defined according to the function of the translation under defined pragmatic conditions.
- Quality is *“fitness for use”*. This is in line with the skopos interpretation. The idea is, however, that anything that goes beyond the clients' needs is regarded as a waste.
- Quality is the *degree of equivalence between ST and TT*. In this case, quality is defined by the degree of conformity with the ST, and characterized as accuracy and consistency of, for example, the terminology.
- Quality is the *result of a good process*, where the concept of quality is seen as an aspiration. The idea is that high-quality processes produce high-quality translations and that cooperation between responsible colleagues during the processes creates good results and trust.
- Quality is also described as *“not merely an absence of errors”*.

### 4 Frequently mentioned problems with revision

In interviews with the professional translators who get their work revised, the problem most often mentioned is that of unnecessary changes or *over-revision*. A typical situation is that the reviser wants the TT to appear as if it had been translated by him/herself, or that the reviser does not demonstrate much tolerance for the translator's original suggestions, even in cases where they are not obviously incorrect. In his study, Künzli (ibid.: 124) observes a similar problem with a large number of unjustified changes and with revisers who “impose their own linguistic preferences at the expense of the translator's decision”.

A connected problem is frustration about *messy revisions*; messy because both important and unimportant changes are inserted in the TT without any attempt to grade or justify them. Mossop (2007: 176) mentions this problem and proposes a visual distinction between necessary changes and mere suggestions.

Another problem is the use of *evaluation forms*, especially if they are used not only for quality control, but also for quality assessment, i.e. as a tool for hiring and firing translators. There seems to be a need for transparent forms for different purposes. Gile's above-mentioned formula of quality (section 1) could be useful for such purposes because – at least theoretically – it also takes positive or neutral results into consideration.

*Giving and taking criticism* is problematic for some translators and revisers. Also the thought of being constantly monitored seems to make translators particularly sensitive to criticism. Some translators contest the evaluation or do not like to hear about the revisions because they do not understand why so much has to be changed. Others like to get feedback and explanations about “why things have to be changed”. It is sometimes the case that revisers do not like to talk with the translators whose work they have revised. As mentioned earlier, colleagues revising colleagues, a kind of peer reviewing, is frequently used in professional situations. This can also be problematic because some colleagues do not like to criticize their peers and this can give rise to conflicts of interest.

*Poor quality of the source text* is a problem frequently mentioned by translators and revisers. Experts are not always good writers and drafts written by non-native speakers of the language can be unclear. The worst-case scenario is when the experts themselves are not even able to explain what their text actually means. Gile (1995: 118) mentions the problem of poor quality of the ST and pleads for the “author-is-no-fool” principle, which means that translators should work hard on comprehending the sense of the source text, “again and again until they reach a Meaning Hypothesis that makes sense, or finally come to the conclusion that the author actually did make an error”.

As my interviews with the professional translators and revisers show, frustration at the *constant cuts* in the time and money provided for translation services is a problem for usually meticulous revisers. The prominent strategy in businesses is maximizing profit: the aim is to achieve as high a quality as possible – at the same time as costs are continually minimized. For the revisers, who have been accustomed not to let errors pass, it is nearly unbearable that the revision part of the process is sometimes first cut back and then cancelled altogether. Mossop (2007: 114) calls this a “struggle between time (that is, money) and quality”. It is a dilemma where the professional reviser may be forced to give priority to quality. Künzli (2007: 54) also mentions this problem. In his study, he observed that “[r]evisers need a *revision brief*, stating explicitly what is expected from them in terms of full or partial revision and what parameters of the draft translation they are supposed to check.”

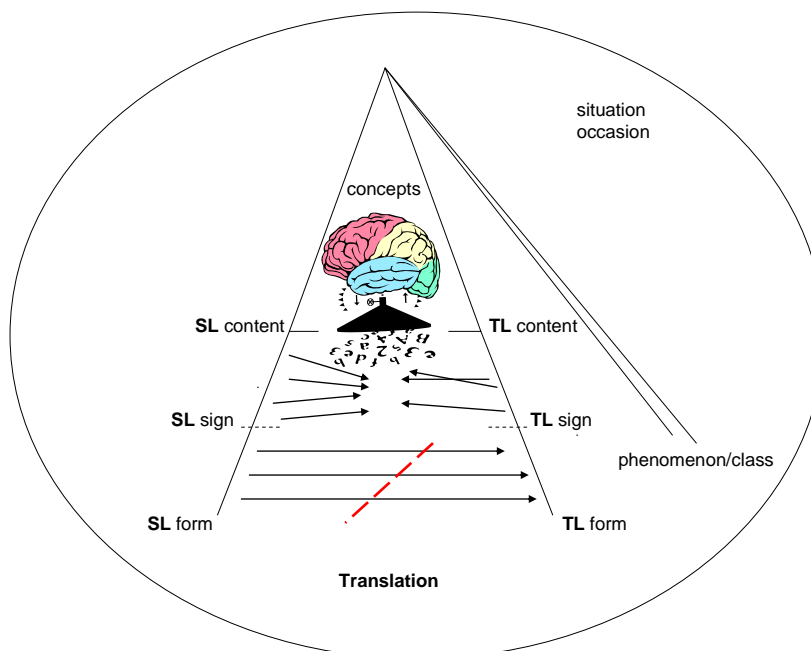
## **5 The translation and revision processes**

The translation and revision processes are complicated because many brains, concepts and perceptions are involved. They are also complex processes of confronting meaning/sense on one hand and confronting and/or keeping apart form/expression on the other hand. The keeping apart

seems to be particularly important in translation between cognate languages like German and Danish, as the two languages often show unexpected differences. False friends constitute a large part of the errors made in relation to this language pair (Hansen 2006: 276 and 279).

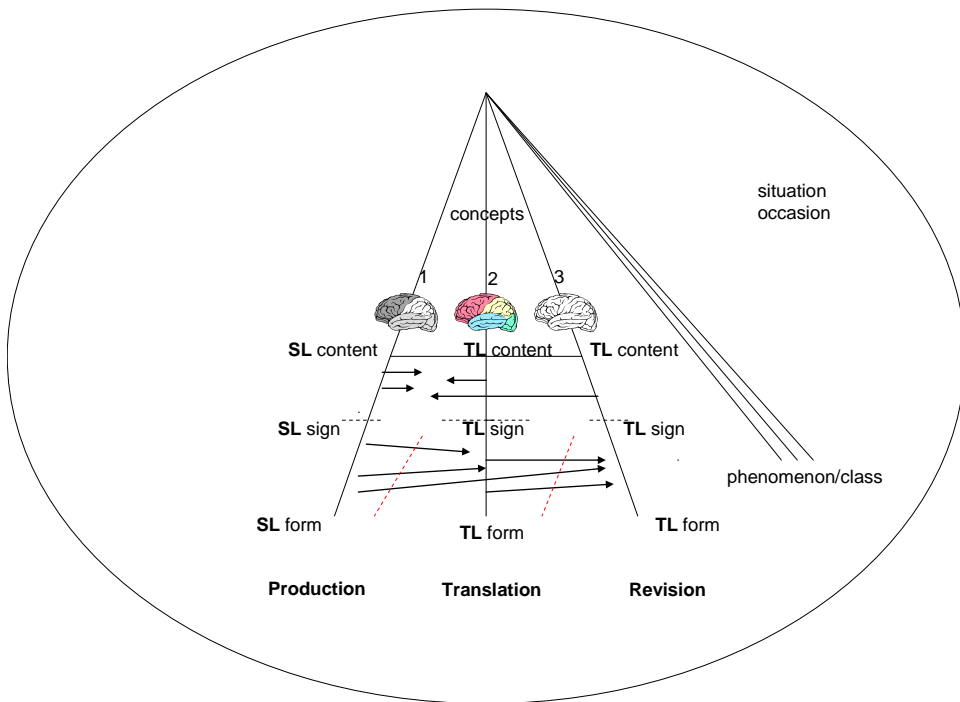
In order to get to a better understanding of the translation and revision processes and to illustrate the relationship between expression and sense in a text during these processes, in Hansen 2008a, I resorted to classical semiotic theories and models by Hjelmslev 1943, 1966; Baldinger 1966 and Heger 1971. Overall, I follow Bühler (1934, 1982), who regards signs as units of *different dimensions* like morpheme, word, phrase/clause, paragraph and even text. As signs they are used in actual situations where we refer to phenomena or in general statements where we refer to classes of phenomena.

Figure 1 shows the translation process which takes place in the brain of the translator in a communication situation. On the right side of the model, there are two lines referring to the phenomenon/class. This is meant to express that it is not expected that the reference with two signs should be totally equivalent.



**Figure 1:** The translation process

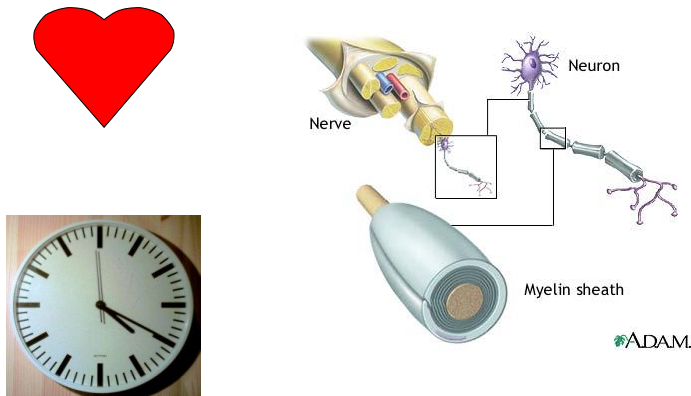
If we also take the author's production process of the source text and the revision process into account, the model becomes more comprehensive. As can be seen in figure 2, the participants/brains involved in the process from the ST to the revision of the TT now include the producer/author of the ST, the translator, and the reviser of the TT – three brains at work on the same text. Their concepts have to converge but the forms have to be kept apart, at least during the process, in order to avoid interference and to keep a critical distance.



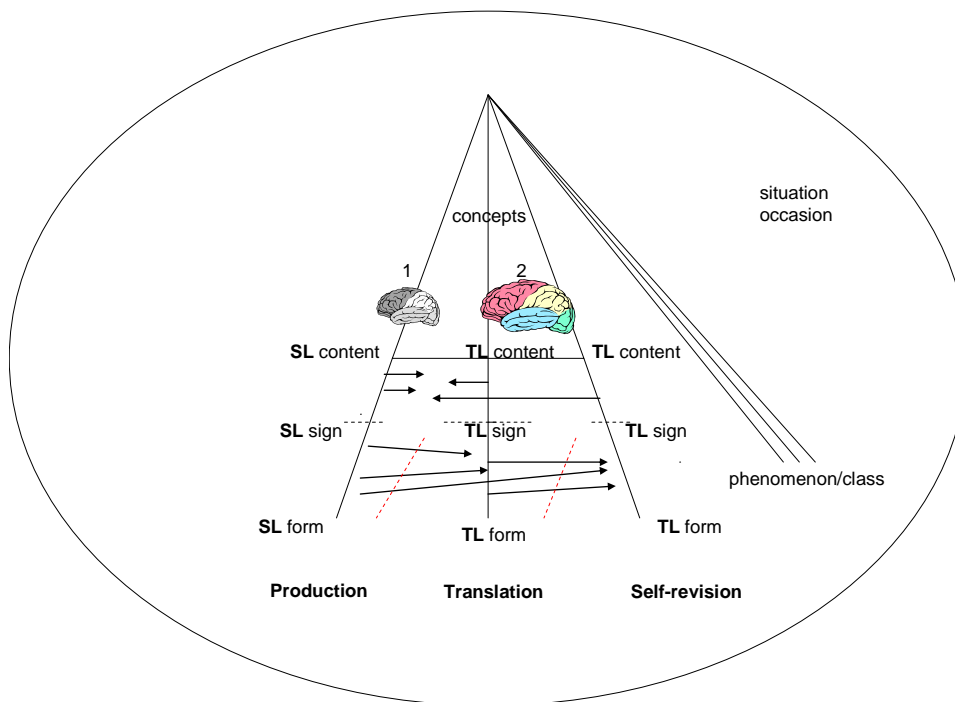
**Figure 2:** Source text, translation and revision

In the case of self-revision, only two brains are involved, the author of the source text and a translator (see figure 3). For the translator, however, there are two different processes and they affect each other. Self-revision is a different process in comparison to revision of other translators' target texts. One reason why self-revision is difficult is that people fall in love with their own formulations. The same myelin threads are used again and again. The space of time between writing and revising the translation, looking at the task with "fresh eyes", plays an important role here:

## sympathy/myelin/time







**Figure 3: Self-revision**

It is obvious that the process becomes even more complicated with the use of Translation Memory Systems, where the translator, parallel to translating, has to check matches and to revise both pre-translated sentences that appear on the screen and his/her own final translation. As Mossop (2007: 115) puts it, “the translator has a mixed translation/revision job to perform”.

In large organizations like the UN, according to the Language and Conference Services Division, there are thousands of brains involved in the translation and revision processes and it has to look as if it were one hand that has written all the documents, as if it were one brain. In addition to the responsible actors mentioned above, there are pre-editors who check the ST for the correctness of the information provided and who monitor references and terminology, eliminate ambiguities and ensure validation of terms and diplomatic and political inviolability. There are particular requirements for the concordance and synchronization of such processes. The more languages involved, the more diversity there is, and the more attention there must be given to recruitment of translators, training, content management, terminology control and planning, in order to maintain quality. Discussions, coaching, contacts and quality circles, annual reports and meetings are used to achieve a systematic and comprehensive quality control.

As an example of practices in companies with many brains involved, in her description of the development, realization and control of the complicated translation processes and revision processes of Mercedes-Benz, Mertin (2006: 259ff) presents the methods and tools of project management and quality management, supported by Workflow-Management-Systems.

## **6 Longitudinal studies at the CBS**

The revision training I started in 1983 and, especially, the exams in translation and revision, where students had to analyze the source text and to revise the target text, identifying, classifying and correcting errors and arguing for their changes, showed that it was not necessarily the case that *those students who were the good translators were also the good revisers*. This observation had to be investigated empirically. What could be the reasons? My assumption was that translation competence and revision competence, though closely connected, are different competences, and that not even experienced translators are automatically good revisers. In the two longitudinal studies, I investigated the relation between the two competences.

## 6.1 Experiments

### 6.1.1 The students' longitudinal study

From 2003 – 2007, I carried out small pilot experiments with students every year at the beginning of the last semester of their translator and revision training at the CBS. What was tested was their ability to produce an acceptable translation of an everyday text, and to find and correct the errors in a simple translated text. As only about 5.5 million people speak Danish, in translator training both directions of translation had always been weighted equally. For the experiments, the translation direction was from Danish into German, and the same was the case for the revision. This means that some of the students had to translate into and revise their second language. Usually between 25 and 30% of the students are to some degree bilingual.

The students received a translation brief and the ST. They were asked to translate the text without aids. They were allowed the time they needed and most of them finished the translation task within 15 minutes. Then they received the revision task where they were asked to revise the TT. It can always be argued against these experiments that it is primarily the linguistic competence that is being tested; however, grammatical, lexical and idiomatic errors constitute an important part of revision processes, and I also tested accuracy (omissions), attentiveness, insertion of new errors, the ability to find alternatives and the degree of over-revision.

### 6.1.2 The professionals' longitudinal study

The experiments with this revision task were similar to the students' task. It was also the same text that had to be revised. The translation task was different, because with the professional subjects I did new experiments with Translog and retrospection with replay, as I had in my experiments in 1997. I had already carried out similar translation-revision tests with the same subjects in 1997 and was, therefore, able to compare the results. (The results of this investigation will be described elsewhere.)

## 6.2 Evaluation and analysis of the results

The translation and the results of the revision task were analyzed and evaluated, separately and anonymously. The TT of the translation task was evaluated according to criteria which had been spontaneously agreed on by a competent native speaker of German and myself (see Hansen 2007: 15). For the revision task, I also used native speakers of German. We could agree on 17 errors, and

we then counted how many of these 17 errors the subjects had marked and corrected and how many they had ignored. These were the main criteria for the evaluation of the revision task. Wrong corrections and unnecessary changes were also registered but, as these numbers were small, we did not include these results in the general evaluation. However, as mentioned in section 4, “unwarranted” changes are a frequently mentioned problem in professional revision, so I kept an eye on the subjects’ unnecessary changes and wrong corrections, and the results are given in section 6.3.4.

The evaluation categories for both tasks were *good*, *acceptable* and *poor*. In order to be able to compare the results of the two tasks only the extreme results, *poor* and *good*, were compared. All the average results, i.e. those in the *acceptable* group, were ignored. For each course from 2003 to 2007, and also for the professionals’ longitudinal study (students’ and experts’ experiments in 1997/2007), we only counted the subjects who were in the groups *good – good* (GG) or *poor – poor* (PP) in both tasks, and those who were in the groups *poor in one and good in the other task* (PG) or vice versa (GP).

### 6.3 Results

The students’ longitudinal study, for the courses from 2003 to 2007, shows that all four combinations are represented, apart from 2006, which was an “annus horribilis” with only poor results. It should also be mentioned that the curriculum at the CBS was changed between 2004 and 2005, which must have had an impact on the results. However, what is interesting is that *all four constellations* are represented, nevertheless (see table 1):

**Table 1:** Results of the first longitudinal study: Students from 2003 to 2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
both tasks:					
<b>GG</b>	2	3	2	0	3
<b>PP</b>	2	3	6	8	7
<b>GP</b>	1	1	2	0	1
<b>PG</b>	1	2	2	0	2
Acceptable:	2	8	5	3	5
total:	8	17	17	11	18

As to wrong corrections and unnecessary changes, there were, on average, about 0.5 wrong corrections per student. Generally, there was, on average, 1 unnecessary change per student each year, apart from 2006, when there was an average of 3.2 unnecessary changes per person.

In 2007, I did several control experiments with the students of the 2007 course, using other translation and revision tasks, and I got similar results, i.e. there were always some who were good at translation and poor at revising and vice versa.

Accidentally, the control experiments showed one interesting result in relation to one of Mossop's principles for correcting (2007: 156): "don't retranslate!" The task of the experiment was a revision of a translation into German of an official website-text about the Dansk Sprognævn (Danish Language Council). The text contains about 40 errors on two pages. A bilingual student with German as her main language did exactly what Mossop warns against: she retranslated the text. When she realized that she had misunderstood the task, in a second try, a week later, she revised the same text. The results are surprising: in the retranslated text, she corrected 29 of the 40 errors, she retained 9 errors, and in 2 cases she has inserted a new error. In the revised text, she could only correct 12 errors, i.e. she ignored 26 and made 2 new errors. As a reviser, she was not attentive to the errors of the translator and/or could not distance herself from the translator's proposals (see figure 2). This seems to indicate that translation and revision must draw, at least partly, on different skills and competences (see figure 5).

All four constellations were also found in the professionals' longitudinal study – both in 1997 and again in 2007, see table 2:

**Table 2:** Results of the second longitudinal study: Students in 1997 as experts in 2007

	<b>1997</b>	<b>2007</b>
both tasks:		
<b>GG</b>	4	5
<b>PP</b>	3	4
<b>GP</b>	5	1
<b>PG</b>	1	3
acceptable:	15	15
total:	28	28

### 6.3.3 *Some observations*

- In the group of five subjects who in 2007 have good results in both tasks, there are three bilinguals and two native speakers of Danish who translated into their L2. For one of the bilinguals Danish is his L1 and for the other two German is their L1.
- Three of the five above-mentioned subjects, who in 2007 have good results in both tasks, also proved to be good in both tasks in the 1997 experiments. It is interesting that one of the three is not bilingual – it is her L2 she revises and translates into. Of the two bilinguals who are in this group, one has Danish and the other German as their L1.
- As we train translation in both directions, all subjects were tested again in 2007, for translation from German into Danish. This experiment showed that the five above-mentioned subjects with good results in both tasks also were good translators in the other direction, which for three of them meant working into L1.
- As to their profession today, it can be said that two of the five subjects with good results in both tasks have worked for 10 years as professional translators in large companies. They can definitely be called "experienced translators". Three of the professional subjects hold today management positions. One of them has worked as a professional translator for some years. The other two only translated occasionally. With respect to the question of "experience", it is interesting that the two experienced translators were already good at both tasks in 1997. As they

were competent 10 years ago, the question could be asked: what has “experience” contributed to their revision competence?

- The results show that there are professional translators (with 10 years’ experience) who have good results for translating but poor results for the revision task and vice versa.
- There were eight bilinguals who participated in the experiments in 2007. Four of them had the result *acceptable* in the translation task and *good* (1), *acceptable* (2) or *poor* (1) in the revision task. One of the bilinguals had poor results in both tasks. None of them work as translators today.

#### 6.3.4 Corrections, wrong corrections and unnecessary changes

The revision task of the 28 experts (8 bilingual, 20 native Danish) gave the following results:

- corrections: the bilinguals on average corrected 11.5 (max 16, min 6 of the 17 errors), i.e. 2.5 more errors than the native speakers, who on average revised 9 errors (max 14, min 5 errors);
- wrong corrections: bilinguals only 0.25 on average, native speakers 0.2;
- unnecessary changes: bilinguals 2.25 each on average (max 5, min 1), native speakers only 1.25 (max 3, min 0).

In this connection, it can be mentioned that one of the bilinguals who was “good” at both the translation and the revision task, because she identified the errors and corrected them properly, inserted the most, i.e. 5, “unnecessary changes”. During the experiment before she starts revising, she immediately expresses her doubts: “how much can I correct without embarrassing the translator?” She explains this and says that both revising and receiving corrections are sources of conflicts between some of her colleagues.

My general impression is that students and professionals revise texts according to the way their teachers have revised (or marked) their written translation tasks. However, bilinguals may have the tendency not just to correct the most obvious errors but also to improve the text.

## 7 Discussion of the results

The two studies should be regarded as pilot studies with general, not domain-specific texts. The subjects should have been able to complete the tasks easily. What can be concluded from the first results is that:

- the relationships between bilingualism/non-bilingualism, translation competence when translating into L1 or L2, and revision competence are complicated and deserve further investigation;
- not even experienced translators are automatically good revisers and vice versa.

One important aspect of the revision process was not tested explicitly in my experiments, i.e. the *ability to explain, classify and justify the changes*. This ability seems to be crucial if we think of the frequently mentioned problems of revision processes and the need to give and take feedback, and

connected with this, conflicts between colleagues because of over-revision or unnecessary changes (see section 4 of this article). However, the ability to classify, describe and explain phenomena comes from knowing or being aware of their existence. Knowing what to look for presumably supports the process of identifying the errors.

## 8 Describing, explaining, and justifying changes: what can be done?

Mossop (2007: 9) suggests that revision training could wait until after university studies and that such training should preferably be part of a practicum in a workplace. The results of my professionals' longitudinal study (1997 – 2007), however, show something else. As can be concluded from the interviews in 2007 with the experts at their workplaces, systematic revision training, as part of the university curriculum, can improve and facilitate the revision processes considerably. Furthermore, being able to explain and argue for the necessity of changes seems to prevent frustrations and conflicts.

In the questionnaire and interviews, 10 of the 14 translation experts point out that the revision course at the CBS was important for their profession. As two of them say, for example:

”Vi kan gå lidt mere professionelt til det, uden at være krænkende”.

(We can revise more professionally – nobody feels offended.)

”Det, at argumentere for rettelserne, hjælper til at gøre revisionerne professionel – gør at personlige konflikter opstår sjældnere end hos andre kollegaer”.

(The ability to argue for the changes adds professionalism to the revisions – with the effect that conflicts with our colleagues occur less often than between other groups [where colleagues do not have the necessary tools to argue].)

”På grund af undervisningen er det meget hurtigere at forklare ”Fehlerbündel” præcist”.

(Because of the training it is much quicker to explain complex errors precisely.) (*My translations*)

For “Fehlerbündel”, i.e. complex errors see Hansen (1996: 156f).

It can be concluded that the CBS-model and the classification of errors which we developed over the years are still useful 10 years later in professional environments, in Denmark and Sweden and even for quality control in large companies in Germany.

### 8.1 The CBS Classification of errors

Several aspects have an impact on the classification, evaluation and grading of errors:

- The need for and the purpose of the classification, and, especially, the purpose of the grading of the errors. The issue here is whether the revision and the grading is mostly text and client/reader-oriented or business-oriented (with the purpose of hiring and firing translators), a distinction made by Mossop (2007: 118).
- Traditions, ethical rules, norms and standards concerning translation in the translators' countries, cultures, and languages, and additionally curricula of translator training including social, political and cultural aspects. Traditions of language acquisition and training in genres, registers and terminology are also important.
- The environment in which the translation and revision processes are carried out, e.g. international organization, company, translation agency, translation bureau, free-lance

translator, or students' translations – and the kind and purpose of the translation task. Not all texts need full revision. Sometimes less than full revision is perfectly acceptable.

- Typical text types that have to be translated – legal texts, technical or marketing texts, with or without TMS, etc.
- The languages and language pairs involved.

The classification of errors (see appendix) can be used for all kinds of texts. It is a very general classification and the types of errors can cover several subtypes. Our training has always been text and client/reader-oriented, but it is an open classification and, if necessary, it may even be supplemented with aspects that make it *business-oriented*, for example, including the assessment of aspects of the translator's service, such as “keeping deadlines” or “following style-sheets”.

What seems to be really difficult is describing and, especially, grading *good* translations. Perhaps workplace frustrations could be avoided and the profession could become more attractive if successes were mentioned more often.

As to the language-pair involved, the classification reflects the typical errors between German and Danish and vice versa. An attempt was made by Pavlovic 2007 to apply this classification to the language pair Croatian–English. It worked well, though the typical errors had to be related differently to the description levels and units.

The CBS Classification of errors was also tested in an investigation of differences between errors produced by human translation, and errors produced by translation supported by TMS. The study proved to be useful even though the errors are different, especially on the text-linguistic level where segmentation, reference, co-reference, inconsistent terminology, and wrongly expressed directive speech-acts play tricks. The proposed matches do not always fit in the context. On the semantic level, the translated terms or expressions may, for example, be either too general or too specific and this creates logical problems with respect to coherence.

## 8.2 *Who is a good reviser?*

With the exception of small countries, where translators tend to work in both directions, professional translators usually translate into their mother tongue. They are often bilinguals and sometimes translation is even equated with bilingualism. Bilingual translators – and often also those who translate into their mother tongue – may well lack the conceptual tools needed for the justification of decisions or changes. They may be able to translate automatically with a perfect result. In order to argue and justify their decisions, however, they would need translation theory, terminology, and some knowledge of linguistics and the stylistics of genre and register. As described in Hansen (2003: 33ff.), in translation process research with Think-aloud protocols or Retrospection, it is much easier for the subjects to comment on their translations into their foreign language than on their translations into their mother tongue. The reason seems to be that they have learnt the grammatical system of the foreign language consciously and in doing so have also acquired the terminology to describe potential problems, changes and errors.

The ideal reviser seems to be a *competent (bilingual) translator* who in relation to his/her main language or mother tongue has the *awareness, knowledge and theoretical background comparable to that of a non-bilingual translator* who had to learn the target language the hard way. Here we may have one explanation as to why good translators are not always good revisers.

## 9 Improvement, training and experience

Correcting errors, omissions and unclear passages is one part of the revision process – according to Gile (2005: 53), the reviser, an experienced translator, also *improves* the translations. But as mentioned in section 4, too much improvement, which is sometimes regarded as unnecessary, causes irritation. Some results from the professionals' longitudinal study show that striking a balance between correcting and improving texts may be a question of empathy and *experience* – but that it is also a question of resources. As one of the experts in translation and revision expresses it during the interview:

Man denkt immer, es geht noch besser, ich muss die perfekte Formulierung finden, ich muss den Text verschönern, denn man sieht ja die ganzen Möglichkeiten, die man hat. Das Problem ist aber, dass man keine Zeit dazu hat. Mit den Jahren, mit der Erfahrung und Routine habe ich gelernt, dass man einfach weiter muss, dass man schnelle Lösungen finden muss, die in Ordnung sind statt immer etwas Besseres finden zu wollen. Die Erfahrung hat mir da sehr weitergeholfen alle brauchbaren Lösungen, die lesbar sind, zu akzeptieren. Der Leser weiß ja nicht, dass dort auch etwas anderes hätte stehen können – wenn es nur nicht falsch ist.  
*My translation:* It is always as if it could be done better, as if I should find the perfect formulation, as if I should upgrade the text, because I can see all the possibilities for improvement. But the problem is that there is no time for that. Via experience and practice I have learnt that I have to move on, to find quick solutions which are ok – instead of always trying to find something which could be better. Experience has helped me considerably to accept all usable solutions as long as they are correct and readable. The recipient does not know that there could have been something else in the text – as long as what is written is correct.

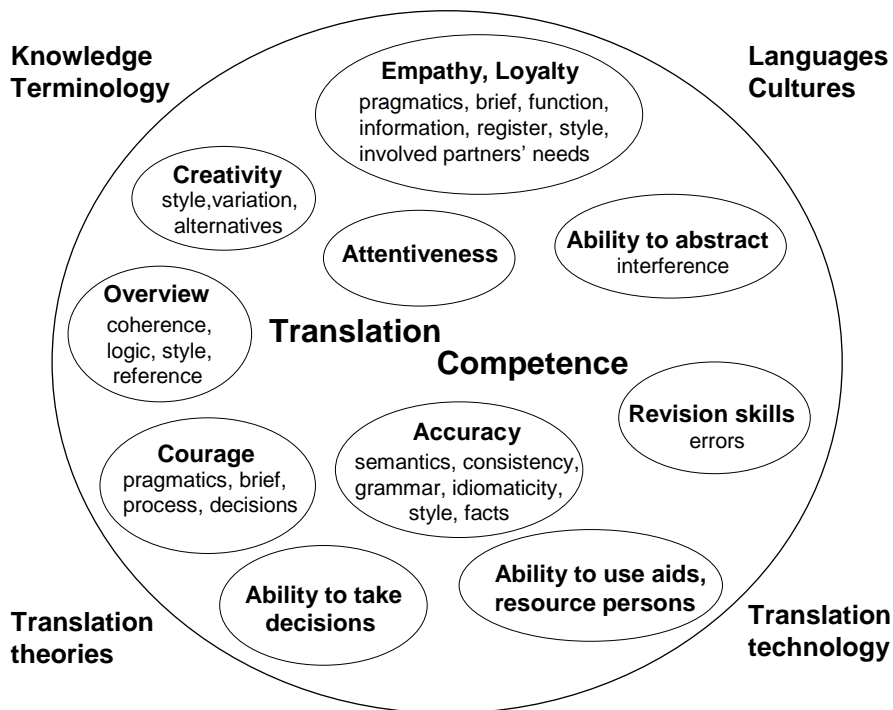
Here we see the effect of experience. The improvements which are sometimes regarded as “unnecessary changes” need to be investigated further. Improving a text may not always be lucrative and translators may sometimes feel offended by improvements that at first sight seem unnecessary. However, this need not imply that all changes for the better that go beyond correcting obvious errors are superfluous or that they evoke negative reactions. Attitudes to improvements are closely related to the purpose and situation of the revision procedure. For many recipients of revision, not only corrections of errors but all changes for the better are highly welcome and appreciated.

## 10 Conclusion

The general interest in explicit standards and norms, quality assessment and revision can be interpreted as an indicator of some imbalance, especially as this enormous interest in quality is accompanied by a constant economization of time and money.

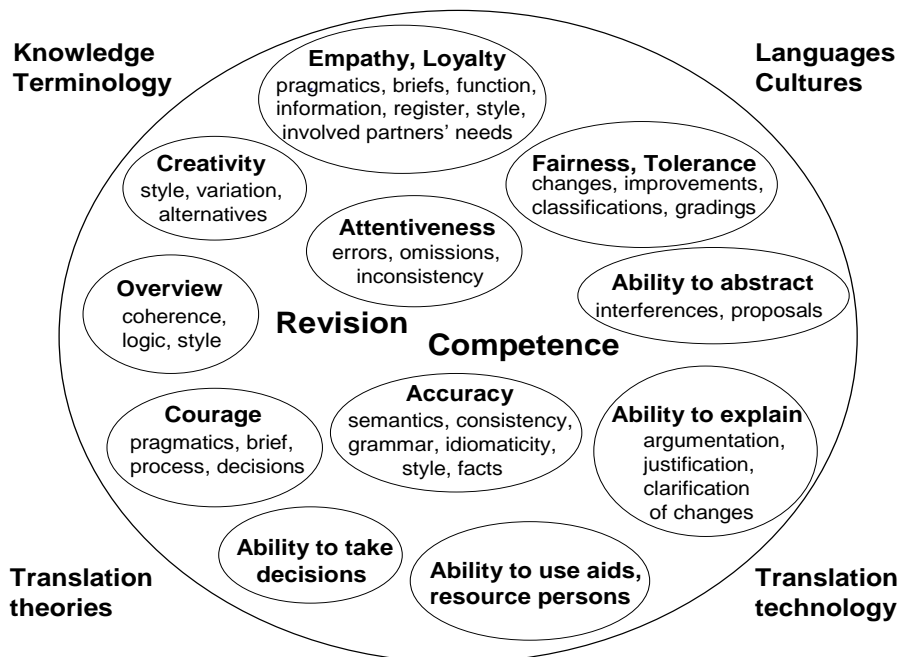
Translation competence and experience cannot automatically be equated with revision competence, nor do they necessarily correlate with bilingualism or being a native speaker of the target language. In Hansen (2006: 27), I investigated and defined the relation between typical errors and the translator's attitude, qualifications, abilities, skills and competences – see the following Translation Competence Model:



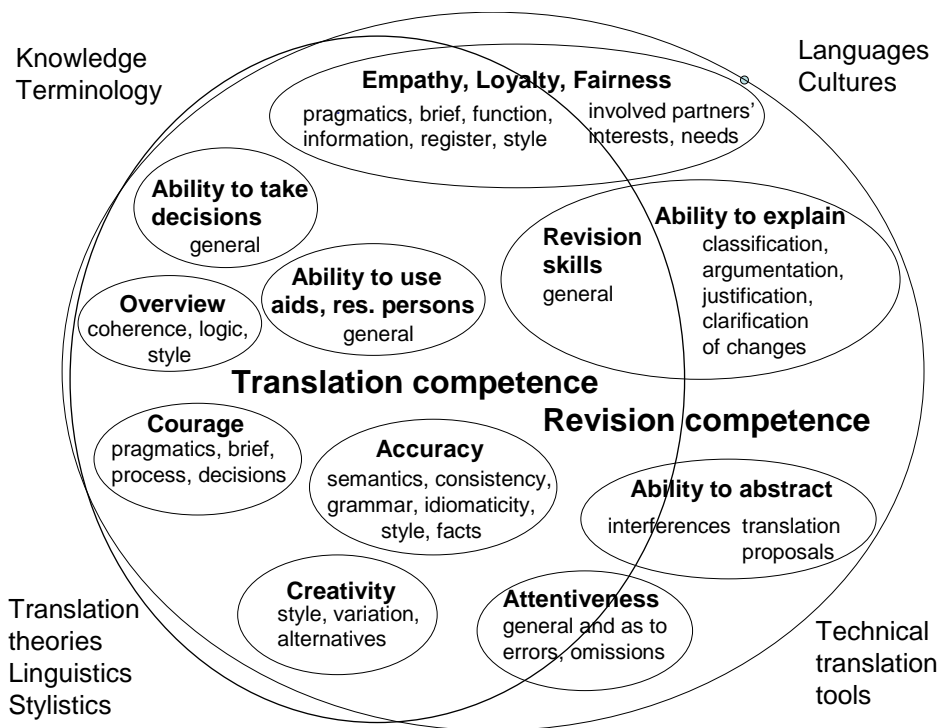


**Figure 4:** Translation competence model (based on Hansen (2006: 27))

As also illustrated by the brain models in section 5, translation revision seems to require additional skills, abilities and attitudes, and/or enhanced levels of competence in certain areas. In the following Revision Competence Model, the revision competence is shown to be closely related to the translation competence, but partly different.



**Figure 5:** Revision competence model



**Figure 5:** Combined Model of the Translation and Revision Competence

With respect to the necessary presuppositions of revision, that is *attentiveness* to pragmatic, linguistic, stylistic phenomena and errors, the *ability to abstract or distance oneself* from one's own and others' previous formulations, *fairness*, and *explaining* and arguing – these can be trained at universities, in separate Masters' courses on revision. As can be seen from the interviews with the professional translators who were trained ten years ago in revision procedures, being familiar with revision processes makes it easier to give and take (constructive) criticism. Being well grounded in the theories, tools and procedures for revision is a good starting point for the profession – the rest can/must then be left to experience and practice.

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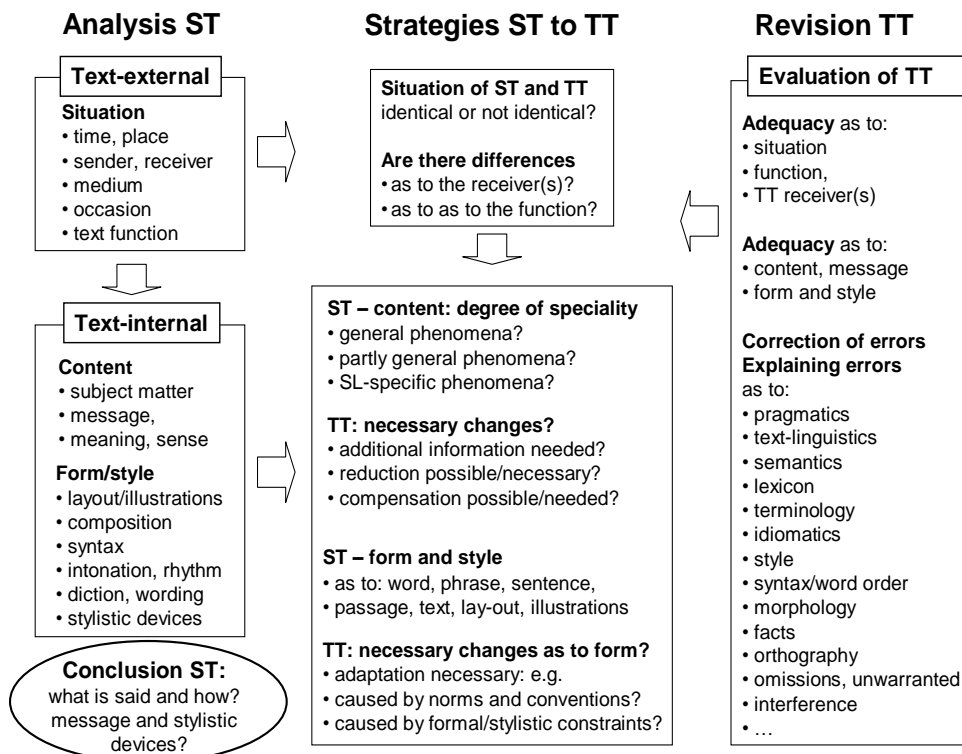
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## Appendix

### 1 CBS Model

Figure 6: CBS Model



## 2 CBS Classification of errors

### *Classification of errors in relation to the affected units and levels of linguistic and stylistic description*

#### **Pragmatic errors (pragm) – misinterpretation of the translation brief and/or the communication situation, e.g.:**

- Misunderstanding of the translation brief: wrong translation type (e.g. documentary-informative translation instead of communicative-instrumental translation, often a **deixis** problem)
- Not adapting the TT to the target text receiver, the TT function and the communication situation: lack of important information, unwarranted omission of ST units (**omis**)/too much information in relation to the ST, the TT receiver's needs in the situation, e.g. dispensable explanations (**disp**)
- Disregarding norms and conventions as to genre, style, register, abbreviations etc.

#### **Text-linguistic errors – violation of the semantic, logical or stylistic coherence:**

- Incoherent text: not semantically logical, often caused by wrong connectors or particles (**sem.log**)
- Wrong or vague reference to phenomena, e.g. incorrect pronouns or wrong usage of articles (**ref**)
- Temporal cohesion not clear (**tense**)
- Wrong category, e.g. indicative instead of subjunctive mood, active instead of passive voice (**cat**)
- Wrong modality, e.g. via inappropriate modal particles or negations (**mod**)
- Wrong information structure, often caused by word order problems (**word order**)
- Unmotivated change of style (**change of style**).

**Semantic (lexical) errors (sem):** incorrect choice of words or phrases.

**Idiomatic errors (idiom):** words and phrases that are semantically correct, but would not be used in an analogue context in the TL.

**Stylistic errors (style):** incorrect choice of stylistic level, stylistic elements and stylistic devices.

**Morphological errors – also “morpho-syntactical errors” (msyn):** wrong word structure, or mistakes in number, gender or case, etc.

**Syntactical errors (syn):** wrong sentence structure.

**Facts wrong (facts):** errors in figures, dates, names, abbreviations, etc.

### ***B. Classification of errors in relation to the cause “interference” or “false cognates”***

Interference is regarded as a projection of unwanted features from one language to the other. These errors are based on an assumption of symmetry between the languages which appears in some cases, but not in the case in question. Several levels and units of linguistic and stylistic description are affected. The errors can also be characterized as, for example, pragmatic, text-linguistic, lexical-semantic, syntactic or stylistic errors.

Considering the language pair German and Danish, the following kinds of interference prevail:

**Lexical interference (int-lex):** words and phrases are transferred from SL to TL. This is especially often the case with prepositions

**Syntactic interference (int-str):** the sentence structure or the word order is transferred

**Text-semantic interference (int-ref):** the use of, for example, pronouns and articles is transferred

**Cultural interference (int-cult):** culture-specific phenomena are transferred.