

2 Revision

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With the introduction of ISO 17100 Translation services – Requirements for translation services, the term “revision” found its way into translation. In practice, revision is not the only term used for this activity. In translation business, terms like revision, proofreading and editing are sometimes used as synonyms. This can cause considerable confusion. For the sake of clarity, the definitions of these terms as used in this article are presented here:

- **Revision** is the “bilingual examination of target language content against source language content for its suitability for the agreed purpose.” (ISO 17100) ISO 17100 requires that a third person, other than the translator, revises the translation. Revision is an obligatory step in the mandatory translation process according to ISO 17100.
- **Proofreading** “in the translation industry, [is the] checking of the text for *Mechanics* and the *Presentation parameters*, often by a non-translator.” (Mossop 2020: 249) Proofreading is therefore a monolingual correction process which takes care of spelling, punctuation and grammar as well as typography and layout.
- **Editing** is “the process of reading a text that is not a translation (or is not being treated as a translation) to spot problematic passages, and then making or recommending any corrections or improvements that are needed to meet some standard of quality.” (Mossop 2020: 246) This means that editing is a monolingual activity, it is not part of the actual translation process – it is not even mentioned in ISO 17100 – and it normally refers to a process in the publishing industry.

In order to deliver the desired result, it is paramount to clearly define what is to be checked during revision, which means that we need a clear revision brief, just as we need a translation brief for translation.

2.1 Revision and quality

Revision is a quality assurance measure. The aim of quality assurance is to achieve and maintain the desired level of quality in a product or service (ISO 9000:2015). This means that revision is intended to improve the quality

of a translation until the desired level of quality is achieved. Consequently, once the desired level of quality has been reached, no further corrections should be incorporated into the translation (minimalism).

In order to understand the mechanics of quality and quality management, a few words are needed to state some important aspects or principles of quality assurance:

- **“Quality can not be inspected into a product or service; it must be built into it.”** (Deming 1982: 227) This means that an originally bad product cannot be made into a high-quality product by any quality assurance measure. For example, if you let an unqualified (and probably cheap) translator translate a text and the quality of this translation is worse than sub-standard, there is no way you can mend that by using a qualified or even especially qualified reviser.
- **Rule of Ten:** This quality management rule states that to fix an error found at a later stage in the supply chain or value chain will cost 10 times more (money and time) to correct than in the prior stage, which means the costs of undetected errors increase by a factor of **ten** from stage to stage in the value chain (Clark / Fujimoto 1991). For translation revision this means that the more carefully the translator works, the faster and cheaper revision and the entire translation process will be.
- **No evaluation during revision:** Revision is a quality assurance measure; its aim is to improve the quality of a translation. Quite often, revisers are asked to evaluate the translation during revision. But the aim of evaluation is to assess the quality of a product. If revisers insert corrections, they change the original translation, so – in this case – the product evaluated is not the end product, but “work in progress”. It is also important to note that revision requires a lot of concentration. To categorize and grade each error takes concentration away from the actual task of making the translation better.

Revision does not always improve translation quality; sometimes the quality of the translation after revision can be inferior compared to the unrevised translation (Künzli 2007; van Rensburg 2017). In order to ensure that revision improves translation quality, revision must be organized in a systematic and transparent way. To achieve this, two parameters are paramount:

- Revision decisions
- Revision competence

2.1.1 Revision decisions

When does revision improve quality?

The first step is, of course, to determine which level of quality must be achieved. The desired quality level must be discussed and determined with the customer and documented in a revision brief. This includes defining the relevant quality criteria and their associated error categories (see Kurz in this volume) that must be corrected. Consequently, the task of the reviser on finding a potential error is to decide whether this is really an error according to the determined quality level. The reviser's decisions must be objective, justified and verifiable.

Why do we need objectivity? Why can't we rely on revisers' linguistic intuition? They are linguistic experts. So, let us have a look at the definition of objectivity / objective:

Cambridge Dictionary defines 'objective' as based on facts and not influenced by personal beliefs or feelings. Merriam Webster defines 'objective' as independent of individual thought and perceptible by all observers.

This means that everybody who looks at the correction should come to the same conclusion as the reviser. If we respect this principle, we will have fewer disputes and thus provide clarity. This view is also shared by the scientific community when assessing the quality of scientific methods and studies. For example, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines **scientific objectivity** as follows:

A characteristic of scientific claims, methods and results. It expresses the idea that the claims, methods and results of science are not, or should not, be influenced by particular perspectives, value commitments, community bias or personal interests, to name a few relevant factors. Objectivity is often considered as an ideal for scientific inquiry, as a good reason for valuing scientific knowledge, and as the basis of the authority of science in society. (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2017)

Thus, by being objective, revisers can strengthen their authority.

Revisers' statements such as "I don't like this expression", "We don't say that in English", "I just know it" are not necessarily shared by other observers and therefore are not valid justifications for corrections. In Fig. 1, we show how revisers can arrive at objective and verifiable revision decisions.

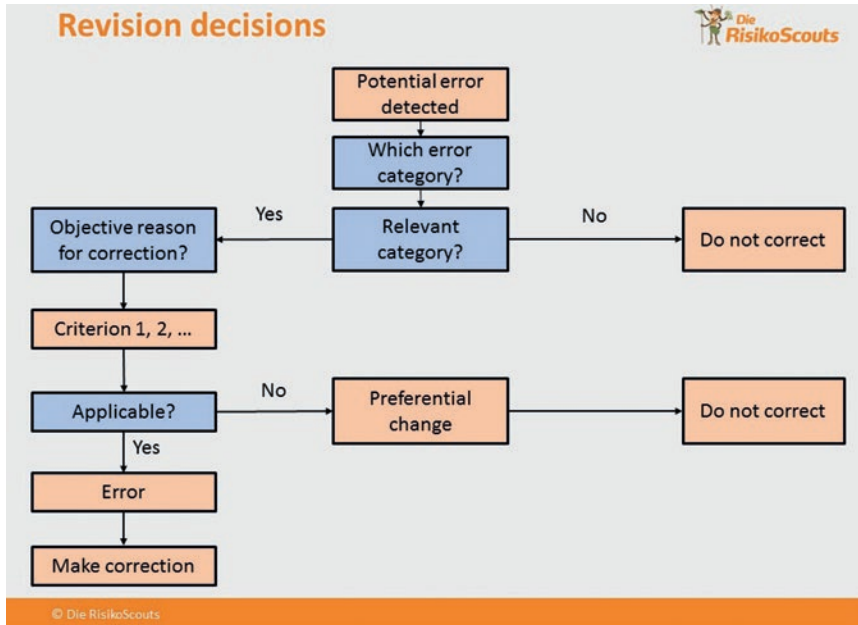


Fig. 1: Revision decision procedure

To illustrate the decision process, we would like to present an example. Suppose you are revising a translation of a service manual for a wheelchair and come across the following sentence:

Mount the holder for the drip stand “A” on the neck rest holder “B” and tighten the screw with the included Allen key. (based on Rea®Azalea® Manual wheelchair passive Service Manual)

Your first intuition may be to correct “Allen key” into “hex key”. So, this would be a potential error. Now, the first question would be: Which error category would this potential error belong to? Answer: terminology error. Now, you check the revision brief and/or style guide to find out whether terminology errors are to be corrected. The revision brief lists terminology errors among the relevant error categories, so, “Yes”, terminology errors must be corrected. The next question, then, is whether there is an objective reason to change “Allen key” into “hex key”. Which objective criteria can be used to decide whether this terminology change would be justified?

1. Is this term included in the customer's term base? You simply have to look it up in the customer's term base, if there is one at all.
2. Do the definitions of "Allen key" and "hex key" match according to the relevant technical literature? The best source for technical definitions are standards, textbooks or technical course books.
3. Are there differences in usage in the required target language? To be able to decide this, you have to consult corpora of technical texts in the target language or refer to corpora of your own technical translations compiled with a corpus tool (e.g. Sketch Engine, BootCat). Usage frequency might also be used as an indicator for tending towards one or the other.

The next step is to determine whether these criteria are applicable. If at least one of these criteria is applicable, it is an error and the correction is justified. If none of the criteria is applicable, it would be a preferential change and thus must not be corrected.

The distinction between justified corrections and preferential changes is not only important for revision itself but also for the evaluation of revision quality (see the "Revision Quality" section below). Competent revisers are therefore well advised to devise at least one criterion for any error category used.

2.1.2 Revision competence

ISO 17100 is not very enlightening with respect to revision competence. It requires the reviser to have the same competences and qualifications as the translator as well as translation and/or revision competence in the subject area. However, revision competence is not defined at all. In practice, generally, no difference is made between revision competence and translation competence. This would mean that every translator is able to perform revisions. Experience and some scarce empirical data (e.g. van Rensburg 2017) show, however, that this is not the case. Thus, revision competence must entail additional skills compared to translation competence. In translation science, only few competence models for revisers have been developed so far (e.g. Hansen 2008, Robert et al. 2016). We decided to present Hansen's competence model as an example (Fig. 2).

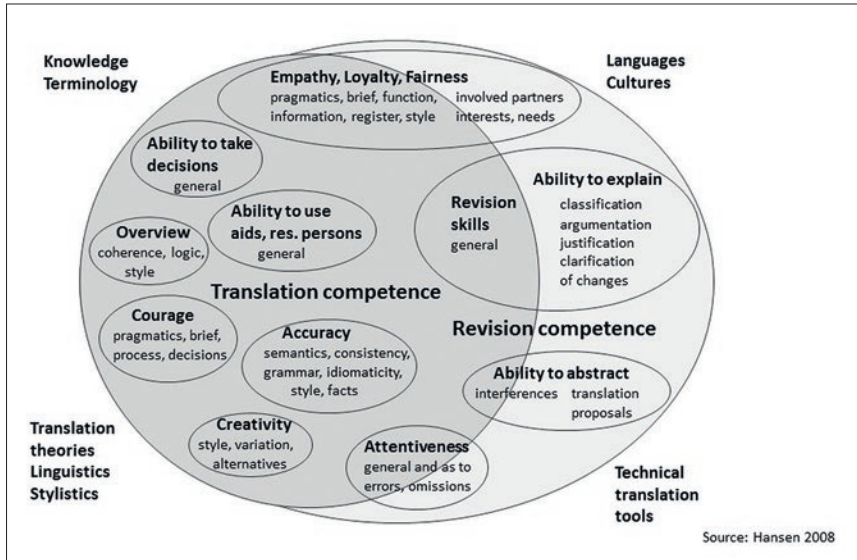


Fig. 2: Combined Model of the Translation and Revision Competence (Hansen 2008, 272)

According to Hansen, translation competence and revision competence share some sub-competences, e.g. accuracy, ability to take decisions, ability to use aids, etc., but revision competence requires additional sub-competences “and/or enhanced levels of competence in certain areas” (Hansen 2008, 271). Key competences of a reviser are e.g. the ability to justify and clarify changes made to the translation, as well as “the ability to *abstract or distance oneself* from one’s own and others’ previous formulations (...)” (Hansen 2008, 272). Hansen’s statements support our view that revision decisions must be taken according to objective criteria and that changes to the translation should be minimal, i.e. only necessary changes and no preferential changes (= unnecessary changes) should be made. Hansen also lists interpersonal competences, such as empathy, loyalty and fairness as essential attributes of a competent reviser. These interpersonal skills are very important because revisers must respect translations done by others, not comparing them with their own strategy, and they must be able to give constructive feedback. Mossop (2020) mentions similar sub-competences including also “knowledge of revision procedures”, “ability to revise to varying degrees” and “cautiousness to avoid making the translation worse and to keep in mind one’s own limitations” (Mossop 2020, 118–119). Mossop as well as Hansen, Robert et al. and van Rensburg emphasize that one of the core competences of a reviser is to avoid unnecessary changes because they waste time, are a source of distraction from real errors, might cause new errors and bring about interpersonal problems between reviser and translator.

With regard to translation market developments, it is of fundamental importance that revision education is incorporated into the curricula for translator education.

2.2 Revision quality

ISO 9001:2015 Quality management systems – Requirements stipulates the following benefits for an organization that implements a quality management system (QMS):

1. the ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements;
2. facilitating opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction;
3. addressing risks and opportunities associated with its context and objectives;
4. the ability to demonstrate conformity to specified quality management system requirements. (ISO 9001:2015)

In order to achieve these objectives, processes have to be organized according to the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle.

PDCA / PDSA is an iterative, four-stage approach for continually improving processes, products or services, and for resolving problems. It involves systematically testing possible solutions, assessing the results, and implementing the ones that are shown to work. (Mind Tools n. d.)

This means that besides the development of efficient production processes (i.e. translation, revision as well as other quality assurance measures), we need standardized instruments to check whether our processes produce the required quality and to modify these processes accordingly. In ISO 9001:2015 this process of continuous improvement is visualized as follows (Fig. 3):

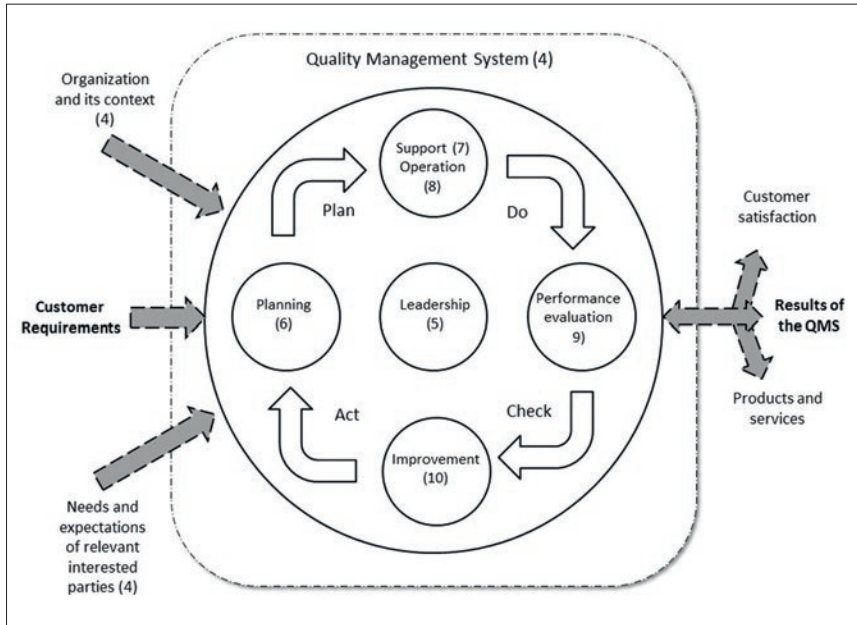


Fig. 3: Representation of the structure of ISO 9001 in the PDCA cycle. Note: Numbers in brackets refer to the clauses in ISO 9001:2015. (ISO 9001:2015)

According to ISO 9001, the process step 'Check' comprises 'performance evaluation'. In the case of revision, this would mean that we must check the quality of the revision. As mentioned above, the aim of revision is to improve the translation, so the task is to assess the improvement that was actually achieved with revision. In other words, to check whether the quality of the translated text is better after revision than before and how much so.

In order to be able to measure revision quality, we first need to establish revision categories, or as van Rensburg (2017) puts it "possible outcomes of actions by revisers when revising". According to van Rensburg (2017), Künzli (2007) and other translation scholars, the following four categories are relevant: Necessary changes, Unnecessary changes, Errors overlooked and Errors introduced.

Necessary changes are errors appropriately corrected by the reviser. Unnecessary changes are changes to the unrevised translation that cannot be justified, i.e. that objectively cannot be classified as errors (see section 'Revision decisions' above). Errors overlooked are errors in the unrevised translation that have not been corrected by the reviser. Errors introduced are new errors

that were not present in the unrevised translation and which the reviser has introduced (van Rensburg 2017).

There are several approaches to the assessment of revision quality (e.g. Arthern 1983, Didaoui 2006, Künzli 2007, Robert 2012, van Rensburg 2017). We use these approaches as a basis for the development of our own assessment model, but do not fully apply them, because they either use inconsistent categories (e.g. Arthern 1983, Didaoui 2006) or are not intended for application in practice (Künzli 2007, Robert 2012). Another possibility to assess revision quality could be to evaluate the translation before revision and after and compare the two results. This procedure, however, would leave out unnecessary changes, which are an essential category when assessing revisions:

... it is important to take unnecessary changes into account in a context where language services are provided and paid for. Any wasting of time negatively influences the cost-effectiveness of the revision process, and if feedback needs to be given to the translator, unnecessary changes could negatively affect the relationship between the reviser and the translator. (van Rensburg 2017, 75)

In addition, unnecessary changes are also a source of potential errors.

Once the categories are established, we need to quantify them to get objective, verifiable and comparable results on the basis of which we can rapidly and transparently decide whether a revision has achieved its goal. This could be done by assigning a score to each category. *Necessary changes* are the desired effect of the revision and increase the quality of the translated text. The score assigned to this category should therefore be positive. *Unnecessary changes* are an undesired outcome of the revision and should be avoided, because the quality of the translated text does not improve and they are a waste of time. The score assigned to this category should therefore be negative. *Errors overlooked* should also receive a negative score because – although the quality of the translated text remains the same – the aim of the revision has not been achieved, the quality is as bad as before. Compared to unnecessary changes this outcome is worse for the quality of the translated text, so the penalty should be more severe. *Errors introduced* are the worst case, since the quality of the translated text is lower after revision than before, while the time taken for revision is wasted. This means that three of the categories are considered as having a negative outcome, while only one category has a positive outcome.

The scores assigned should thus reflect the impact of the different categories of revision changes on the quality of the translation. The following model is

an example for possible scores assigned to the named categories and outcomes and their interpretation:

- Necessary changes: bonus of 2 points
- Unnecessary changes: penalty of 1 point
- Errors overlooked: penalty of 2 points
- Errors introduced: penalty of 3 points

Once the revision changes and assigned bonuses or penalties have been checked, all assigned points should be added up. If the result is positive, revision has improved the translation quality (not of individual sentences, but of the translated text as a whole). If the result is negative, translation quality (not of individual sentences, but of the translated text as a whole) has decreased after revision, meaning the revision was of poor quality. If the result is zero, this could have two reasons: either the original translation was of such a high quality that no corrections were necessary, or the reviser has collected some penalties but has compensated them by a higher number of necessary changes. In this case, the individual corrections should be inspected more closely, so that a final judgement can be made, since a zero result does not allow conclusions about the quality of the revision.

This scoring model results in transparent and comparable assessments of revision quality. It also takes into account the category 'unnecessary changes' which is of fundamental importance for the quality of a revision. As long as reference values and scoring values are not changed, the model allows for the provision of key indicators and the verification of the effectiveness of the quality assurance measure 'revision', as required by ISO 9001. It also supplies indicators for the verification of the effectiveness of revision training.

The scoring model has some drawbacks, however:

It is possible that the allocation of scoring bonuses and penalties without additional weight or severity is too vague and could lead to a bias in the overall assessment of revision quality. If, for example, the reviser has corrected a grave translation error (accuracy) but introduces an accidental typo with the correction, this would lead to a negative result (2 bonus points and 3 penalties), although the overall quality of the translation is definitely higher with the correction than without. Therefore, it might make sense to assign different weights to different error categories (as in translation evaluation) or to use severities, e.g. 'minor' or 'major', to allow for a differentiation of the impact of the error corrected or introduced.

'Related corrections', i.e. introducing several changes in order to make one correction, pose another problem. Related corrections are often necessary in the case of collocation errors or in the case of corrections requiring further changes in subsequent or preceding clauses. In these cases, we have to decide whether this is just one correction receiving one scoring value or several corrections receiving several scoring values. Both options are valid, but have consequences for the overall assessment of revision quality.

Whatever the decision, it is important that the model used is explained transparently to the revisers. If changes are made to the allocation of scoring values or to the evaluation criteria, the revisers must be informed. In this case, it is important that we do not compare results from before the change with results from after the change.

The scoring values proposed in this model are by no means sacrosanct. They must be constantly reviewed and adjusted depending on the unique situation (e.g. text types, translators' experience, revisers' experience, quality of source text). We recommend creating a 'revision quality assessment team' responsible for checking revision quality. This team should meet regularly and discuss whether the scoring model, scoring values, severities etc. are still suitable. They should also check whether all team members reach similar or – ideally – identical results when assessing revision quality. If this is not the case, the model should be adjusted – as this is an iterative process, there is no recommended standard model.

With regard to processes, the revision quality assessment team should decide on the following parameters for revision assessment:

- Frequency
- Scheduling
- Documentation of assessment process and assessment results
- Development and documentation of key indicators
- Version management

2.3 Summary

This article presents a clear definition of revision and the revision procedure and suggests a systematic approach to revision. It has been shown that we cannot state whether revision improves the quality of a translation without

considering the outcome of revision. Some studies (Künzli 2007, van Rensburg 2017) have found that the quality of the translated text is often worse after revision than before. If we want to use revision as a quality assurance instrument, revision parameters and criteria must be clearly defined in a revision brief and transparent revision procedures, which guarantee that revision results are objective and reproducible, must be implemented. Only if it is embedded in a comprehensive quality management system will revision be an effective quality assurance measure.

This article has also shown that ‘unnecessary changes’ is a very important criterion when assessing revision quality. Competent revisers do not incorporate unnecessary changes. In order to be able to make objective revision decisions revisers need specific revision competence, i.e. they need specific revision training. In view of the increasing demand for qualified revisers, the curricula at universities should also be adapted to this relatively new profession in the field of translation. It is therefore essential to integrate specific revision skills into translator training in order to be able to provide the market with highly qualified revisers in the future.

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