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Quality Manual

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Quality Assurance and Quality Control Manual

Scope

This practice captures the quality assurance and quality control procedures employed by Apex to assure delivery of correct translations or to minimize the number of errors contained in them as much as possible under the circumstances.

Applicable Documents

SAE Translation Metric J2450, issued December 2001 (Ref. http://www.apex-translations.com/documents/sae_j2450.pdf).

Definitions

‘Quality Assurance’ (QA) = All measures and processes that serve the purpose of preventing errors from being made.

‘Quality Control’ (QC) = All measures and processes that serve to detect and correct any errors that may have been made in spite of Quality Assurance (QA).

‘Error’ = Any objective and verifiable linguistic error, or inaccurate content translation, as well as any error concerning terminology, orthography, punctuation, or style. This concept explicitly excludes subjective preferences of terminology and style, retroactive changes to the meaning or structure of the original source text, and changes to a translation that are not supported by the original source text.

Note – not using a preferred term does not constitute a translation error, unless we have been advised in advance that we should adhere to a preferred glossary. Often, client reviewers of a translation do not distinguish between their rejection of the intended meaning of the source text and its translation. Naturally and logically, if a reviewer dislikes the way the source text reads, he or she will also dislike its translation. Clients need to understand and accept that translators are neither copywriters nor editors. While the client may do with his text whatever he or she pleases, the translator can do only one thing with it: translate it as truly as possible, based on his best understanding of its intended meaning.

‘Native Speaker’ = A speaker of a language, who grew up in and with that language and culture, and who is intricately familiar with all facets and levels of writing and speaking that exist within that language. It does not mean that the person must have been born in a certain country or that his or her parents must have been natives of a certain country or nation; nor does it mean that the person must be a citizen of any specific country or state.

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Quality Assurance

Translator Selection and Qualification:

In order to be a top-quality translator, it does not suffice that a person is fluent in two languages. A truly qualified translator must also have specific knowledge of the subject matter he or she translates, i.e., the translator must not only be a native speaker of the target language and have fluency in the source language, he or she must also be a subject matter expert of the subject matter he or she will translate.

Apex scrutinizes the CVs and resumes of solicited and unsolicited translator applicants based on our current needs or as part of our ongoing effort to add qualified translators to our translator pool.

Apex verifies – to the best of its abilities – the translator’s education, experience, and professional qualifications, and that the translator is truly a native speaker of the target language into which he or she claims to be capable of translating.

Verification that the translator’s capabilities is performed by sending a test translation to the applicant (or several if appropriate). This test translation will typically be a text dealing with the subject matter in which the translator claims to be an expert. For example, if the translator claims to be an automotive engineer or to have experience with automotive translations from English into Mexican Spanish, Apex will typically have the applicant prepare a test translation of an automotive text from English into Mexican Spanish.

Upon completion of the test translation, one or more of Apex’s established and proven translators, with the same language combination and subject matter expertise, will evaluate the translation. The results will then be reviewed by the Production Manager (who is himself proficient in 16 languages). If the translation contains one serious content mistranslation or misunderstanding, or if it contains one significant spelling error, or more than 0.3% of the total number of target words of less significant errors, such as punctuation errors, wrong style, or level of speech, the translation will not be accepted. At this level, we also put emphasis on formatting, layout quality, and small errors or oversights, since we must assume that the applicant should pay more than normal attention to the preparation of a test translation. Consequently, if the test translation shows a level of superficiality, or lack of attention to detail, or negligence concerning formatting, we would have to expect more errors of this type in later translations. Essentially, we expect a test translation to be flawless.

The following are the criteria we apply in assessing a test translation:

- Did the translator use the terminology that is typical and customary for the pertinent subject matter field?
- Did the translator use this terminology in a consistent manner?
- Are there any spelling errors?
- Are there any punctuation errors?
- Does the translation show that the translator understood the content and subject matter of the source document correctly and fully?
- Is the translation complete?
- Did the translator add any text not contained in the source document?
- Did the translator omit any text contained in the source text?

- Is there equivalency in style and level of speech between the source and target text?
- Does the formatting correspond to the formatting of the source document?
- Is the overall formatting and appearance of the translation neat, clear, and visually appealing?

If the answer to any of these questions is negative, Apex will most likely not add this translator to its pool of qualified and approved translators.

Continued Monitoring of Translators:

Throughout the time translators are employed by Apex, we continuously monitor their performances and the frequency with which they commit errors, as well as the nature and seriousness of those errors. We provide feedback to them, alerting them to first signs of apparent lack of focus, diligence, or attention to detail. A performance record of each translator is kept in our translator database. If a translator shows a decline in overall performance quality, this would show up in our database. The production manager would then contact this translator and discuss measures for correction/improvement.

Apex also uses this database to capture subject matter skills, educational background, etc. of all translators who are either actively employed and/or contracted by Apex, or wishing to be considered to translate for Apex in the future.

Terminology Standardization:

We maintain glossaries in order to assure consistency in style and terminology for future translation projects. Some of our clients supply or require the use of pre-existing glossaries.

We also employ memory-based translation aids such as Trados, DejaVu, SDL, Star Transit, WordFast, etc. The use of these systems inherently improves consistency of terminology and style.

In larger projects involving more than one translator per target language, we use Terminology Coordinators (TC), whose task it is to make sure that the translators appropriately apply standardized terminology. This is most often done by using one of the translators as a lead translator.

Quality Control

Apex' goal of preventing errors is achieved by ongoing improvements in our production process. However, we do not rely on Quality Assurance alone. At Apex, there are several post-production checks and controls in place.

Each translation goes through final proofreading by a qualified linguist, who is not the translator. The proofreader checks for completeness and correctness of the translation, as well as for spelling, punctuation and syntax errors, or unusual style. Errors are either corrected by the proofreader or the translation is sent back to the translator for repair.

The Apex Quality Manager performs random sample checks (RSCs) on translations. These RSCs typically comprise 5 percent of a text. If any errors are found in these samples, the translation is relegated back to the proofreader.

Finally, we apply **SAE Recommended Practice J2450** (Translation Quality Metric), which is a consistent and industry-wide recognized method for measuring translation quality.

If the Overall Document Weighted Score according to SAE J2450 (ref. http://www.apex-translations.com/documents/sae_j2450.pdf) is above 0.02 after proofreading the translation is returned to the translator with the request to correct all errors. No translation will be released by the Quality Manager for delivery to the customer until and unless its Overall Document Weighted Score according to SAE J2450 is under 0.02 based on the joint best assessment of translator, proofreader and Quality Manager.

Although a mean Overall Document Weighted Score of 0.02 according to the SAE J2450 translation metric is considered a tough goal to reach in the translation industry, Apex aims at a zero Overall Document Weighted Score and attains it in 95 percent of all projects.

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How the Metric Works:

SAE J2450 has seven error categories. Each one has two subcategories: serious and minor. Each of these categories is assigned a weight or value:

Cat. 1: Wrong term	serious 5 points	minor 2 points
Cat. 2: Syntax error	serious 4 points	minor 2 points
Cat. 3: Omission error	serious 4 points	minor 2 points
Cat. 4: Grammar error	serious 4 points	minor 2 points
Cat. 5: Spelling error	serious 3 points	minor 1 point
Cat. 6: Punctuation error	serious 2 points	minor 1 point
Cat. 7: Miscellaneous error	serious 3 points	minor 1 point

Example:

If a document containing 7,000 target words is received from the translator contained four errors of each type, it would contain a total of 56 errors, 28 serious ones and 28 minor ones, for a total of 144 points. The resulting Overall Document Weighted Score would be $144 : 7,000 = 0.21$.

After proofreading and correcting, we would reduce the errors contained in the documents to a level equivalent to an SAE J2450 Overall Document Weighted Score of 0.02 or less, which is what we guarantee our clients.

While we consider an error score of 0.02 realistic and fair due to the fact that language production is not precision engineering and must heavily rely on human work, focus and attention, we consistently score significantly lower. Indeed, most of our translations contain zero errors or very few minor ones.

This maximum permissible error score does not apply to documents containing fewer than 50 words since only one minor miscellaneous error (1 point) can cause the Document Weighted Score of 0.02 to be exceeded. This means that this algorithm, when applied to documents with 50 or fewer words, creates results that are not useful or helpful in measuring translation quality.