American Translators Association

The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

Overview of Services
General Facts

- Largest professional association of translators and interpreters in the United States; 11,000 members in over 90 countries
- National not-for-profit association with an international orientation, founded in 1959
Membership of the American Translators Association

- Full-time Independent Contractor (42%)
- Part-time Independent Contractor (29%)
- Company Owner (10%)
- Full-time Private-sector Employee (9%)
- Academia (6%)
- Government Employee (4%)
Welcome to the ATA Website!

Today’s global business environment, the stakes are high. From ridiculous headlines to awkward or sloppy use of the local language, translation mistakes can be costly, embarrassing, and even disastrous. The American Translators Association can help you find the skilled translator or interpreter you need for a competitive edge. First, take a minute to learn how to get your job done right the first time. Then, find a translator or interpreter using our searchable online directory of translator and interpreter services.

ATA Mission Statement

The mission of ATA is to benefit translators and interpreters by promoting recognition of their societal and commercial value, facilitating communication among all its members, establishing standards of competence and ethics, and educating both its members and the public.

ATA Membership

Membership in the American Translators Association is an invaluable asset to translators and interpreters working in the industry. Let ATA become your most important professional resource.

In the Spotlight

- LIR CallPro Now Available
- ATA 2012 Elections
- ATA Guide to a Translation Services

Quick Links

- ATA Newsbriefs
- Recent Code of Ethics
- Member-to-Member Discounts
Website: www.atanet.org

- Over 7,000 linguist profiles
- 3.5 million pageviews in 2012
- Most requested language combinations:
  - English into Spanish
  - Spanish into English
  - English into French
  - English into Chinese
  - English into Japanese
A unique certification seal provides clients with objective evidence of a translator’s professional competence
Professional Development
Annual Conference

ATA conference held in a major city every fall

Future Sites

- 2013 San Antonio
- 2014 Chicago
- 2015 Miami
- 2016 San Francisco
- 2017 Washington, DC
Webinars

- 60-minute online educational session offered once or twice a month
- Watch live or recorded sessions

Webinars are available at

www.atanet.org/webinars/language/specialty-specific-sessions
Client Education

Translation
Getting it Right
A guide to buying translation

Interpreting
Getting it Right
A guide to buying interpreting services
Strategic Outlook

Priorities

- Outreach to new membership groups
- Communication strategy
- Further advances of certification
American Translators Association

The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

ATA Certification Program
History

- First ATA exam administered in 1971
  - Developed by practitioners for practitioners
  - Three hour paper/pencil examination

- Major/minor errors

- Originally five texts
  - General
  - Semi-technical
  - Medical
  - Legal
  - Literary
Current

- System in place since 2001
  - Three-hour paper/pencil examination
    - Keyboarded option just started
  - Three source texts
    - Handout 1 – Example from 2006
  - Volunteer graders (also select texts)
  - Twenty-five language pairs
  - Five error levels
Texts

- Three source texts – 225-275 words (or equivalent)
  - Candidates translate two: **Passage A** (required) and **either** Passage B or Passage C
  - **A**: General text that expresses a view, sets forth an argument or presents a new idea
    - *Newspaper editorial, essay, non-fiction book*
  - **B**: Technical, scientific or medical in content
    - *Patient education brochure, operating or installation instructions, encyclopedia article.*
  - **C**: Financial, business or legal in the broadest sense
    - *Contract or lease, financial report, government regulation*
  - B & C may be written by an expert, but not for other experts in that field.
Volunteer Grading and Training of Graders

- Graders are all ATA-certified practicing professionals
- Volunteer graders
- Semi-annual training
- Work together by language direction
- Passage-specific guidelines
- Into-English writing guidelines
Focus on Commercially Viable Languages

- Languages in which there are enough ATA members and energetic volunteers!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Into English</th>
<th>From English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dutch,</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
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<td>French</td>
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<td>German</td>
<td>German</td>
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<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
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<td>Portuguese</td>
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<td>Russian</td>
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<td>Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenge of Text Selection Process

- Source texts selected by language groups
  - Authentic texts with minor editing
  - Passage selection guidelines and review
- Translation challenges
  - Text level
  - Sentence level
  - Terminology level
- Translation Instructions (translation brief)
Framework and Flowchart for Rating

- Holistic test of language transfer
  - *Five-level point system: 1, 2, 4, 8, or 16 point errors (since 2001)*
  - *Fail threshold is 18 error points*

- Framework for Standardized Error Marking
  - *Developed 1994, continuously revised*
  - *Specifies types/severities of transfer/mechanics errors*

- Flowchart for Error Grading
  - *Since 2002*
  - *Attempts to make a subjective process as objective as possible*

- Example 2 – Marked up sample target text
# ATA Certification Program

## Framework for Standardized Error Marking

**Version 2009**

### Errors that concern the form of the exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UNF</td>
<td>Unfinished (If a passage is substantially unfinished, do not grade the exam.)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>ILL</td>
<td>Illegibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>Indecision, gave more than one option</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Translation / strategic / transfer errors: Negative impact on understanding / use of target text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Mistranslation (use a subcategory if applicable)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MU</td>
<td>Misunderstanding of source text (if identifiable)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Addition</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>Omission</td>
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<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Terminology, word choice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Register</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Faithfulness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Literalness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>Faux ami (false friend)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>COH</td>
<td>Cohesion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AMB</td>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Style (inappropriate for specified type of text)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OTH</td>
<td>Other (describe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mechanical errors: Negative impact on overall quality of target text. Points may vary by language. Maximum 4 points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SYN</td>
<td>Syntax (phrase / clause / sentence structure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SP / CH</td>
<td>Spelling / Character (usually 1 point, maximum 2; if more than 2 points, another category must apply)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Diacritical marks / Accents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Capitalization</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WF / PS</td>
<td>Word form / Part of speech</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OTH</td>
<td>Other (describe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Column totals

| 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

A grader may stop marking errors when the score reaches 46 error points.

A grader may award a quality point for each of up to three specific instances of exceptional translation.

Quality points are subtracted from the error point total to yield a final score. A passage with a score of 18 or more points receives a grade of Fail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total error points (add column totals):</th>
<th>Quality points (maximum 3):</th>
<th>Final passage score (subtract quality points from error points):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FLOWCHART FOR ERROR POINT DECISIONS
Version 2009

Understanding / usefulness of target text affected? 
Meaning lost / obscured?
- no = mechanical error (identifiable without viewing source text); maximum 4 points
- yes = translation / transfer / strategy error
  See overall questions, below at left.

Error apparent to any editor?
- no
  Error apparent to typical target reader? (text still intelligible)
  - no
    Error disruptive to typical target reader? (effort required for understanding)
    - no
      4 points
    - yes
      2 points
  - yes
    1 point

Effect on understanding / use / content negligible?
- no
  Merely slight impact on understanding / use / content?
  - yes
    1 point
  - no
    Is interference minimal?
    - yes
      2 points
    - no
      Is disruption limited in scope?
      - yes
        4 points
      - no
        Text as a whole still usable despite this serious error?
        - yes
          8 points
        - no
          16 points

Overall questions to guide decisions:
Can target text be used for intended purpose?
Is it intelligible to the intended target reader?
Does it transfer the meaning of the source text?
Translator Certification Examination
Pass Rates and Number of Examinations (n=7,585) 2001–2011

Number of Exams

Pass Rate in %

Average Pass Rate (+/- 1 standard deviation)
Grading Policy

- Two graders for each examination
- Grade independently
- Then compare scores
  - *If discrepancies, then consult*
  - *Can modify (add overlooked errors, change points)*
  - *Can agree to disagree*
  - *Third grader*
- Review and appeal available
Challenges:

- Specialized testing
  - *ATA exam tests non-specialized translation skill*
  - *Need for specialized testing*
    - *Legal, medical, technical, etc.*
    - *Goes beyond what ATA can do with volunteers*

- Expansion
  - *New language combinations possible*
  - *Depend on volunteer availability*
  - *Challenging process to get started*
What are KSAs?

- K = Knowledge
- S = Skills
- A = Abilities

- Competence is described in terms of KSAs
ISO 17024 General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons 
(2003 and 2012 editions)

- Certification scheme must:
  - Be based on a job and task analysis
  - Describe competence required to perform tasks
  - Be fair, valid, and reliable
- Competence = ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results
- KSA study establishes validity

- Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, from AERA, APA, & NCME 
  (many editions; using 1999 edition)
  - Certification: dependable identification of competence
Ask experts to identify KSAs via focus groups
- *Four focus groups; one included government*
- *Focus group transcript study showed consistency*
- *36 KSAs were identified for job “translator”*
  - *We are aware that in the USG, job is “linguist”*

Develop survey questionnaire to rank KSAs
- *Used Qualtrics survey software*

Conduct survey (1453 completed surveys)
Top Knowledge Areas

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Idiomatic usage (combinations of words)
- General knowledge
- Subject-matter-specific knowledge
- Ethical obligations
Top Skill Areas

- Textual analysis
- Terminology research
- General writing
- Editing and proofreading
- Computer (word processing and Internet)
- Organizational
- Personal time management
Top Ability Areas

- Read source language; write in target language
- Understand nuances and registers
- Perform language transfer
- Verify correspondence (= congruity judgment)
- Common sense
- Follow specifications
- Think analytically and intuitively
Fields Study

- Based on results of ATA KSA survey
- Conducted by Breakthrough Consulting Group
- Led by Dr. Paul Fields
- Developed test “blueprint”
- Each measurable KSA must find a home in
  - Eligibility requirements
  - Certification test or
  - Professional Development
Applicability to USG certification

- Describe government-specific translation tasks
  - Use structured translation specifications
    - 21 translation parameters
      - Provide values for a specific type of translation task
- Hold government focus groups for each task
- Conduct government-specific surveys
- Develop test blueprints (as in Fields report)
- Consider ATA to manage USG certification
Recent Efforts to Strengthen the Exam

- Alignment with ILR Skill Levels
  - “A level of obvious competence with some room for growth.”
  - A passing grade roughly equivalent to a minimum of ILR Level 3 translation proficiency
  - NEW: Reading/writing proficiency scores as eligibility option

- Possible “ATA rating"

- Research (NSF grant proposal)
System Architecture

- Local computer 1 <-> Exam computer 1
- Local computer 2 <-> Exam computer 2

- Shared CertSoft server

- All exam computers talk with the same server
- Proctor monitors exams through server
- ATA HQ downloads results from server
Three-Layer Architecture

- **Layer 1**: local computers (temporarily limited)
  - *Only keyboard, screen, and Internet*
- **Layer 2**: remote exam computers
  - *Pre-configured: selected apps and white list*
- **Layer 3**: shared CertSoft server
  - *Actual certification software (browser access)*

- Very flexible and modular
Where are the exam computers? (Layer 2)

- Currently, “rented” from Amazon
  - virtual computers
  - *ATA maintains a master and launches clones as needed*
- Could be dedicated physical computers
- Can be anywhere (remote access)
  - *Could even be dedicated local computer*
Where is the CertSoft server? (Layer 3)

- Can be rented from a hosting service
- Can be a physical computer in your office
- Currently: Windows 2003 Server w/ ASPX
Security Requirements

- Avoid unauthorized distribution of source texts
- Avoid unauthorized distribution of target texts
- Keep candidate from contacting colleagues
- Make sure target texts get to graders
- Limit website access to a “white list”
What is it like to take the exam?

- What follows is actual screens from an experimental sitting by a candidate named “Tester Tester”
La educación peruana

El Perú se encuentra entre los países latinoamericanos con peores resultados en educación, según un estudio realizado entre 43 países de varios continentes. El estudio se efectuó en una muestra de 4.500 a 10.000 escolares de 15 años, e incluyó pruebas de comprensión de lectura, matemáticas y ciencias aplicadas.

Los resultados de esta evaluación son muy preocupantes si se tiene en cuenta que el objetivo del estudio fue conocer la preparación de los jóvenes frente a los desafíos planteados por la sociedad contemporánea.

En el examen de comprensión de lectura, que tuvo un máximo de 546 puntos, el Perú ocupó el último lugar, con 327 puntos, debajo de México, Argentina, Chile y Brasil.
Please review your translation before clicking the "Submit Exam" button at the bottom of the page.

You have completed more than one optional passage. Please select the one you wish to submit:

Science Tech Medicine

Exam Submission

General
This is where the candidate types in their translation for passage A.

Science Tech Medicine
Now the candidate is translating passage B.

Do not click until you have reviewed your translations and are ready to submit the exam.

Submit Exam
Contacting the ATA

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Email
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Thank you for your interest!
Backup Slides