

## DPSI - Frequently Asked Questions for Unit 3: Written Translation

Objectives of DPSI Unit 3:

The written translation tasks test the candidate's ability to transfer content in a comprehensible and acceptable form from one language into another, according to the particular task requested.

Task 3A

A passage in the Other Language to be translated in **writing** into English.

In Task 3A candidates will be assessed on their ability to produce an accurate and complete written translation from the Other Language into English. (see page 8 DPSI Handbook for full details) <http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/DPSI/DPSIHandbook.pdf>

Task 3B

A passage in English to be translated in **writing** into the Other Language

In Task 3B candidates will be assessed on their ability to produce **an accurate and complete written translation from English into the Other Language**. (see page 8 DPSI Handbook for full details) <http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/DPSI/DPSIHandbook.pdf>

In order to work reliably and effectively, Public Service Interpreters must have:

- A good command of English and the Other Language;
- Competence in the relevant interpreting and **translating techniques**; (see page 3 DPSI Handbook for full details) <http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/DPSI/DPSIHandbook.pdf>

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**Does it matter if my knowledge of the Other Language is only oral?**

- Yes it does, Unit 3 is a written task. It tests your knowledge of the formal written forms of the Other Language. The DPSI is at approximately first degree level in terms of the language skills required. (see page 4 DPSI Handbook for full details) <http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/DPSI/DPSIHandbook.pdf>

**What is a 'fatal error'?**

- A 'fatal error' is an error that results in a FAIL grade

***The following are examples of potential fatal errors:***

- Distortion of the meaning of the source text

- Omission of part/s of the source text
- Getting basic grammar wrong in such a way that it will lead to a misunderstanding or a serious distortion of the meaning as conveyed in the source text (e.g. mixing singular and plural forms, using the wrong tense of the verb, translating numbers wrongly, translating an affirmative as a negative or vice versa, getting the gender wrong, serious spelling errors, leaving out accents when they are used to indicate meaning etc.)

#### **Does a minor grammatical error result in a Fail Grade?**

- Not necessarily, but if the error/s are repeated or there are many minor errors, this could indeed result in a Fail because it would not meet the required language skills at first degree level.

#### **What is a crucial or a major omission?**

- A part or parts of the text are left out or whole phrases or key words are left out.

#### **Can I offer two alternative translations for a word or a phrase?**

- No, you have to offer **one** translation. You have to decide what you think is the correct translation. You will be penalised if you don't. The written passage is meant for the Other Language speaking audience or person who doesn't speak English. You have to convey the meaning clearly and unambiguously in the Other Language.

#### **Can I paraphrase?**

- It is fine to paraphrase if there is no equivalent term available in your language. If you are not familiar with a specialist term or it doesn't come to mind, although there is one available in your language, you may paraphrase once or twice, but points may be deducted for this. It is your responsibility as a professional interpreter to be familiar with the vocabulary for the specialist area you are offering your services for.

#### **Can I use English phrases in Task 3B?**

- No, if the phrase exists in your language. If however the phrase is, for example, a new term in the specialist Option, you may use the phrase, but you have to give an explanation of it in the Other Language. You should make sure that you follow developments in your chosen Option and that you are aware of any new terminology and have your own up to date glossary of new terms in your field.

#### **Can I use an English word in Task 3B?**

- No, if the word exists in your language. If the word doesn't exist in your language e.g. a new English word, you can use the word, but you must explain in your language what it means. Using an English word and adding endings in your language is not acceptable, the aim of the task is to produce a **translation** into the Other Language.
- In some language communities English words may be used to refer to concepts that are specific to the UK system, whilst the Other Language word may not be in common use in the

community. However, as this is a test of your language skills, you should use the Other Language words wherever possible, provided they are generally known. If in doubt, use the word you would use in a real-life situation, bearing in mind that the person you are providing the translation for might **not** speak any English.

**Does it matter if I use a phrase or a word from a closely related language or language variant?**

- Yes it does, you have opted to be tested in a language or a variant of a language and that is the language you must use. If you have opted to be tested e.g. in Slovak, you can't use Czech words.

**Does correct grammatical accuracy matter, after all the DPSI is an interpreting examination?**

- Correct grammar does matter. The written test is set to assess your knowledge of the language in its formal, written form. A professional interpreter may, to some extent, be expected to cope with oral or written translations in the course of his/her work. One or two minor grammatical errors which don't alter the meaning substantially don't necessarily result in a fail, but an accumulation of such errors might. All basic grammar should be correct (see answer to the question above on fatal errors).

**I am a native speaker of the Other Language, how come I keep failing the task 3B, the translation into my own mother tongue?**

- it is not enough to be a speaker of the Other Language, you have to be able to demonstrate that you have a thorough knowledge of the language, including its written format, to the equivalent of first degree level standard. You therefore may need to practice your writing and formal communication skills in the language, before you are able to pass this part of the examination. The crucial element for successfully completing Task 3B is to understand fully the English source text and being then able to translate it faithfully and fully into the Other Language. For some candidates, 3A will be the translation into their own mother tongue; if so the same applies.

**Does punctuation matter?**

- Yes it does, especially where the punctuation is used to clarify meaning or where the absence of punctuation alters the meaning.

**Does accuracy matter, if I can make myself understood?**

- It does, the task assesses your ability to produce an accurate and complete translation which can be used in a professional context. A few minor inaccuracies don't necessarily result in a Fail, although points may be deducted.

**Who is the written translation in the Other Language meant for?**

- The purpose of the written task is to convey the meaning of the source text to a person or an audience of speakers of the Other Language. It has to make sense in the Other Language and be an accurate rendition of the original English text and it has to adhere to the

conventions of the Other Language in format (letter, leaflet etc.), register, tone etc. The audience must be able to understand and act on the communication provided.

### **What is the purpose of the written tasks in the DPSI?**

- It tests your written knowledge of English (Task 3A) and the Other Language (Task 3B).

### **Can I use colloquial language in the written tasks?**

- It depends on the register of the text to be translated. If the text is e.g. a letter containing colloquialisms, then yes. If the text to be translated is e.g. a formal leaflet, then you need to use the formal register. You need to be aware of the register of the source text and demonstrate that you can convey it faithfully in the other language.

### **Does the choice of vocabulary matter?**

- As a professional whose task it is to convey somebody's speech or written communication to another person, it is vital that you convey exactly the same meaning and intention, including all nuances, to the recipient of the communication. The choice of vocabulary is therefore of great importance and has to match that of the original source text.

### **Does presentation matter?**

- Yes it does, the translation has to be legible to the audience it is meant for.

### **GENERAL ADVICE ON TRANSLATING:**

- Read the briefing context carefully.
- Read the text carefully before starting a translation. Make sure you have understood the source text before starting to translate. Do not begin to translate a sentence or paragraph before reading all of it; otherwise you run the risk of following the source language order of words or sentence structure too closely. Produce a coherent translation.
- Leave time to read through your translation at the end of the exam so that you can see whether what you have written makes sense and to check for careless spelling, grammar and punctuation errors.
- Complete the task; serious omissions are penalised. Check whether the translation continues over the page (this is always indicated by 'Continued on next page' printed in bold letters).
- Before sitting the examination you need to have good mastery of both the languages involved, including their orthography and spelling rules.
- Pay careful attention to the correct use of grammar, spelling and vocabulary.
- Pay attention to style (e.g. formal or informal).
- Pay careful attention to the specialist terminology relevant to your DPSI Option. Build up a glossary of specialist terminology. Try to anticipate the terminology in your chosen option.
- Make sure you understand your chosen field and its specialist concepts and notions so well that should a specialist term not exist in one of your languages, you can paraphrase precisely.

- Do not offer two or more alternative translations. This is not good professional practice and will be penalised. It is up to you, not the reader, to select the most appropriate term.
- Do not add words to the translation, you may distort the original meaning or invalidate the text.
- Do not underestimate the power of a good dictionary. It is worth investing in good dictionaries. Use both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. In your preparation a thesaurus is an excellent way to build vocabulary. When consulting a dictionary where more than one term is given for a word, do not use the first term that meets your eye; make sure you select the best term for the context. Where a key vocabulary item is concerned, it is absolutely essential to get it right to obtain a pass. Cross-reference if necessary.
- Be alert to false friends.
- Be alert to the kinds of error that speakers of your particular language combination are prone to make when interpreting and translating between the languages. For example, if your language does not have grammatical categories such as articles and tenses, be sure to pay attention to them when interpreting and translating into English; if your language has very elaborate systems of address forms, remember that you may need to simplify considerably when translating and interpreting into English.
- Be sure you master the letter-writing conventions in English and in your own language.
- Do not be too ready to use an English term in your other language; although residents in the UK may be able to understand you, visitors and people not living here may not.
- Write legibly.
- Read newspapers (including online) and preferably also publications and original documents relating to your chosen option very regularly in both your languages. This will ensure that you keep up to date with current affairs in both cultures and with what is happening in your subject area.
- Use internet research as a tool to increase your knowledge of your speciality, but concentrate on the government, official and university websites, they are more likely to be reliable.
- Watch relevant television programmes in both your languages. This will help you keep up to date with terminology, and you can practise interpreting while you watch.
- Practise as much and as often as possible. Do timed mock exams to get used to managing your time and your nerves. This can help alleviate stress in the exam itself.
- Familiarise yourself with the procedures in your speciality by visiting the appropriate institutions both in UK and when visiting the countries, where your other language is used.
- Use the Institute of Linguists' website for up to date information including the topics for the forthcoming examination  
<http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/DPSI/RolePlayTopics/DPSIRolePlayTopics2008.pdf>
- Check the DPSI Handbook (Chartered Institute of Linguists Updated May 2007;  
<http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/DPSI/DPSIHandbook.pdf> for Assessment criteria for Task 3 – Written Translation (pages 16&17); topics and subtopics of your chosen Option (pages 19-41); information concerning the use of dictionaries ( **use of reference materials in the examination, page 42 DPSI Handbook**) including details on the use of Other reference material; study past papers of the DPSI examination (**for details see the DPSI Handbook page 42**)  
<http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/MaterialsForm/PastPapersOrderFormAug07.pdf>; DPSI Written Markers' Reports 2007  
<http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications/DPSI/WrittenMarkersReports.pdf>