

Preparing for the IoL Educational Trust's Diploma in Translation Examination

A seminar for candidates and course providers

Please refer to the DipTrans Handbook for generalities

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Introduction

As with any other professional exam, the Diploma in Translation (DipTrans) requires focus and preparation. Two essential aspects are involved:

- a. preparing for the exam by learning how to translate at an appropriate level;
- b. passing the exam successfully, having fully prepared for it.

The techniques involved in the preparation for the two aspects are related, but not identical. Always bear in mind that:

- a. no one can expect to pass the exam if they are not good translators and
- b. a good translator will not necessarily pass the exam or perform to the best of their abilities.

It is essential therefore to consider these two different points when preparing for the exam.

Learning how to translate to the appropriate level is a fundamental requirement for success. This involves a clear awareness of the nature of the criteria used to assess translation quality. The following documents provide a detailed analysis of the criteria used, both in terms of general principles, and in terms of the specific criteria used to award a Pass, a Fail, a Merit or a Distinction.

It is important to remember that a competent translator is not simply one who understands and can handle all of the grammatical features of both source and target languages. Linguistic knowledge is a fundamental requirement. All this must be supplemented by sound cultural knowledge, as well as by general background knowledge of the topics handled in the semi-specialised options.

Books on translation such as

- a. Kelly Dorothy, (2005) Handbook for Translation Trainers. Manchester: St.Jerome Publishing
- b. Munday, Jeremy (2003) Introducing Translation Studies – Theories and Applications. London: Routledge
- c. Shuttleworth, Mark and Cowie, Moira (1999) Dictionary of Translation Studies. Manchester: St.Jerome Publishing,
can help with the theoretical part of translation.

Preparation for the exam must rely on:

- a. the ability to write well in the target language, irrespective of subject area;
- b. detailed knowledge and ability to apply all of the linguistic features of both source and target languages;
- c. full awareness and knowledge of both source language and culture; and
- d. knowledge of exam-specific subject areas.

In order to strengthen their knowledge in language and culture, candidates should:

- a. read newspapers / magazines / specialised publications in both source and target language regularly. See for example:

- Alcaraz, Enrique and Hughes, Brian (2002) Legal Translation Explained. Manchester: St.Jerome Publishing
 - Mayoral Asensio, Roberto (2003) Translating Official Documents. Manchester: St.Jerome Publishing
 - Sager, Juan C. (1996) A Practical Course in Terminology Processing. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing
- b. research relevant topics using reliable internet resources as well as dictionaries, encyclopaedias and reference books
 - c. keep in touch with language trends by either visiting the country where the language is spoken or by speaking to native speakers, and watching contemporary television programmes and films in the target language
 - d. read books written as guides to specific countries such as – for Greece – John Cuthbert Lawson’s “Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion: A Study in Survivals” (Kessinger Publishing, 2003), Ruth Warren’s “The First Book of Modern Greece” (F. Watts, 1966), and Κορνήλιου Καστοριάδη “Η ελληνική ιδιαιτερότητα” (Εκδόσεις Κριτική, 2007), for Greece, and – for the UK – Jeremy Paxman’s “The English: A Portrait of a People” (Penguin, 1999), Andrew Marr’s “A History of Modern Britain” (Macmillan 2007), Rebecca Fraser’s “A People’s History of Britain” (Pimlico 2004), for England.
 - e. Use parallel text to study the nuances of both languages.

Improving translation skills is a gradual process. Thus, candidates are recommended to

- a. start with simple materials, and gradually move on to more challenging work;
- b. work slowly and thoroughly at first: it is better to over-check rather than under-check the work.

Potential candidates who at the beginning try to produce their practice translations in the time allocated in the examination stand little chance of improving. So, at the preparation stage, doing 30% of a translation thoroughly is much more productive than trying to struggle through the whole text and producing a poor translation. You need a lot of experience and skills to be able to work at speed and under pressure. Speed can be acquired with constant and steady practice.

Bear in mind that the Diploma in Translation examination requires the ability to produce systematically competent and good quality translations. Translators should only consider sitting for the exam only when they are confident that this is the case.

As far as the examination itself is concerned, a number of points must be taken into consideration:

- a. work will take place in unfamiliar surroundings and conditions,
- b. work will have to be done at speed, and
- c. work will have to be done under pressure.

Conditions of stress and speed are very similar to those encountered in professional situations, where clients sometimes make unreasonable demands regarding deadlines and the amount of work to be produced. Speed combined with quality comes with practice, but the order of your priorities should be quality first and then speed.

The unfamiliarity of the surroundings and conditions will affect stress levels. In an exam situation, there won’t be any opportunity for a coffee break, a phone call to a friend or a quick run round the block to clear the brain. All this can affect the candidate’s approach to the translation, in particular because of:

- a. time constraints,
- b. the limited space available for working (e.g. a small desk and no shelves),
- c. restrictions on resources,
- d. the non-availability of a computer in some places, which means that candidates will have to produce a handwritten script.

Candidates need to prepare themselves by practising in examination conditions i.e.

- a. producing clear and readable handwritten translations,
- b. translating against the clock (i.e. strictly in the time allowed, and with no breaks) and
- c. using only the resources that will be allowed on the day.

All candidates will benefit from at least one mock exam in all papers, conducted in conditions that are identical to those of the examination itself, with no helping hand from the teacher; and handwritten text (as appropriate).

The Diploma in Translation examination is a fairly gruelling experience, and calls for mental stamina.

Both when learning to translate to the appropriate level and preparing for a specific examination, candidates will find many useful tips in Douglas Robinson's "Becoming a Translator" (Routledge, 1997), although the author does not discuss preparation for translation examinations as such.

Last but not least, all candidates must be fully conversant with the "Diploma in Translation: Handbook" (IoL Educational Trust, 2006). This publication can be downloaded free of charge from the IoL website and contains a wide range of useful information for all Diploma in Translation candidates.

I. Criteria for assessing translation quality: General Principles

The Diploma in Translation exam assesses and rewards basic professional competence in translating from any language into English or from English into any other language. Examinations in other combinations not using English are also possible.

The underlying assessment principle recognises what constitutes a professionally acceptable standard of translation, and does so in practical terms and in the context of the texts set for the examination. *Professionally acceptable* is generally taken to mean a standard acceptable for submission to a commercial client. For a translation to be deemed *professionally acceptable*, it should be functionally accurate and appropriate in terms of both lexis and register, and should faithfully render the style and meaning of the original piece of writing. It should, therefore, have the same intended effect on the target readership as the original did on the source readership.

Candidates need to use analytical language skills, and must be able to handle specialist and semi-specialist terminology in both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). They should bear in mind the differences in the relevant norms of the two languages in question and, where appropriate, they should:

- a. respect any originality in the source text (ST) (e.g. syntax and vocabulary) and
- b. convey all cultural elements (e.g. local customs, manners, food and clothing), and render natural usage, colloquialisms, phatic language, routine formulations, common metaphors and technical terms in the target text (TT).

Candidates are expected to write in their target language at mother-tongue level, and reach a high standard of accuracy.

What is *basic professional competence*?

What is a *standard acceptable for submission to a commercial client*?

- a. Candidates should not think they are expected to produce a so-called *flawless* translation. Some editing is expected.
- b. The position envisaged is that of a reasonably competent junior translator.
- c. The seriousness of an error depends on the specific context (i.e. a given error can be serious in one context and minor in another).
- d. Approaches such as gist translations, broad/loose semantic translation and adaptation are not acceptable.

What does writing *at mother-tongue level* mean?

- a. Not all native speakers write well – some native speakers write better than others.
- b. Native speakers who normally write well do not necessarily write well when translating.
- c. Native speakers write some types of text well, and others not so well.
- d. Native speakers might also have problems with SL interference.
- e. A very small number of non-native speakers can write at mother tongue level, but the overwhelming majority cannot.

What is a *high standard of accuracy* when writing in the mother tongue?

- a. General mastery of all aspects of the TL including:
 - correct grammar (including tenses, grammatical words such as articles, and agreements);
 - correct spelling;
 - correct punctuation;
 - respect for TL textual conventions.

What does *the same intended effect* involve?

- a. Establishing the function of the text,
- b. Establishing the style of the ST,
- c. Establishing the register of the ST,
- d. Seeing the ST from the ST reader's point of view,
- e. Identifying the intended readership.

How important is specialist/semi-specialist terminology?

The importance of terminology is dictated by text function and text type:

- terminology and accuracy (e.g. using either “arteries” or “veins” instead of *blood vessels* to translate *αιμοφόρα αγγεία* is a serious inaccuracy in a scientific text discussing the effects of diabetes);
- terminology and appropriateness (e.g. using “high blood pressure” instead of *hypertension* in a medical text with a target readership of health professionals is inappropriate);
- terminology and tone (some subject areas are highly sensitive, and using the wrong term can be hurtful or offensive (e.g. “handicap” instead of *disability*, or the gender-exclusive “chairman” instead of the gender-inclusive *chairperson* (or *president*)).

How important are cultural aspects, and how should candidates deal with them?

Translation solutions are dictated by the item itself, the text function or text type:

- explain, amplify or use a translator's note;
- quote the item as in the ST;
- import the foreign item into the TT.

Some key terms

Collocations refer to the specific environment in which a particular word or group of words normally functions. For example, “fight a battle”, cannot be translated as *μάχομαι μια μάχη / πολεμώ μια μάχη* but simply as *μάχομαι / πολεμώ*. A pleonasm like *μάχομαι μια μάχη πολεμώ μια μάχη* would simply be unacceptable for a native Greek speaker.

Colloquialisms do not necessarily refer to familiar language. Colloquialisms are set expressions that are often, but not always, impossible to translate literally. *Η αγάπη είναι τυφλή* translates conveniently as *love is blind* but the Greek translation of *με δουλεύεις*, should be *are you pulling my leg*. A literal translation would make no sense.

False friends are lexical items that are identical, or dangerously similar, in two languages, but which have different – perhaps completely different – meanings. Many words fall into this category, and there are several dictionaries of false friends on the

market (see the list of books at the end of *Using Resources*). False friends for English-speaking students of Greek include

απολογούμαι, which cannot be translated as "apologise" (which actually means *ζητάω συγγνώμη*);

συμπαθητικός which cannot be translated as "sympathetic";

συκοφάντης which cannot be translated as "sycophant" but as *κόλακας*;

ψυχικός which cannot be translated as "psychic" but only as *μέντιουμ*, *μάντης* or *μάγος*.

Metaphors are a part of speech involving a word or expression used in a non-literal sense or in an unusual setting (e.g. *He is a tiger* or *The rocket ploughed the stars*). Metaphors can cause particular ST comprehension difficulties. *Η καρδιά του είναι πέτρα* or *πάει καιρός* are but a few examples. Also, if we observe the metaphor *κόντεψα να σκάσω από το κακό μου* we realise that the word *κακό* is not related to either *bad* or *evil*.

Phatic language refers to those features in a text which are meant to establish or maintain communication. Some greetings, for instance, are simply used to acknowledge someone's presence, and a reply is not expected (e.g. *Γεια χαρά!* and "Hi!").

II Criteria for assessing translation quality: Pass

Aspects of performance

Aspect of Performance 1: Comprehension, Accuracy and Register – the correct transfer of information and evidence of complete comprehension.

Pass

The translation shows an adequate command of the subject matter. There are no serious errors or omissions in the transfer of information. Any inaccuracies or omissions are minor and will not give false or misleading information to the reader. Acceptable translator's notes, where given.

Aspect of Performance 2: Grammar, Cohesion, Coherence and Organisation of work

Pass

The sentence structure is sound, though with some awkwardness and lapses in grammar, nothing too serious.

Aspect of Performance 3: Technical points relating to spelling, accentuation, punctuation and the transfer of dates, names, figures etc

Pass

The translation is correct in all major technical elements but with one or two minor lapses of spelling and with some errors in punctuation.

III Criteria for assessing translation quality: Fail

General principle

Candidates must achieve a Pass in each of the three Aspects of Performance assessed in order to gain an overall Pass (or Merit or Distinction).

Translations with 5% or more of the source text missing will automatically be awarded a Fail mark.

General Paper (approx 600 words):	5% = 30 words
Semi-specialist papers (approx 450 words):	5% = 23 words

Aspects of performance

Aspect of Performance 1: Comprehension, Accuracy and Register – the correct transfer of information and evidence of complete comprehension.

Fail

The translation shows an inadequate grasp of the informational content. There are a number of clumsy or inappropriate renderings, both major and minor inaccuracies, leading to information being conveyed wrongly at several points. There may also be serious omissions. The translation contains a number of clumsy or inappropriate renderings, which impair or distort the message. There may be some incorrect choice of register and terminology, and some idiomatic usage may not correspond to the intention or sense of the original.

Aspect of Performance 2: Grammar, Cohesion, Coherence and Organisation of work

Fail

The translation does not read like an original piece of writing; it may be stilted and incoherent with little attempt to modify the sentence structure of the original to the target language. There may be over-elaboration and excessive paraphrasing.

Aspect of Performance 3: Technical points relating to spelling, accentuation, punctuation and the transfer of dates, names, figures etc

Fail

A considerable number of technical faults are present which would render even an otherwise good translation unacceptable in professional terms.

Serious errors that may result in a Fail:

In a professional context – indeed, in any context – mistakes are simply unacceptable, and can have serious consequences. For instance, they can:

- a. cause a company to lose a lot of money;
- b. cause a serious accident because the wrong figure is quoted;
- c. cause a machine to overload and break down because the wrong connections have been given;
- d. render experimental results meaningless because of incorrect data;
- e. cause a death because the wrong dosage is quoted.

Such errors can be the result of one simple mistake, for example:

- a. incorrect punctuation;
- b. a missing digit;

- c. a missing letter (e.g. 10g instead of 10mg);
- d. a mistranslated preposition;
- e. an incorrect pronoun.

An example: In a text on the results of a study on the effects of passive smoking, a translator who puts “under the age of 40” (instead of *at least 40*) for *τουλάχιστο 40 ετών* seriously falsifies the results of the study. In a scientific context, this is a very serious error. In an examination situation, a similar view would be taken, and the result is likely to be a Fail, regardless of the quality of the rest of the translation. Note that the seriousness of an error depends on the context, and a given error can be serious in one context, but minor in another.

IV Criteria for assessing translation quality: Merit

Aspect of Performance 1: Comprehension, Accuracy and Register – the correct transfer of information and evidence of complete comprehension.

Merit

The translation shows a good command of the subject matter although at times there is some under- or over-translation or a slight lack of clarity. The vocabulary, terminology and idiom chosen are appropriate throughout, though occasionally a more appropriate rendering than that given in the translation may be found. The register chosen is faithful to the register of the source text.

Aspect of Performance 2: Grammar, Cohesion, Coherence and Organisation of work

Merit

The translation is well organised, with good sentence structure and overall coherence. While not perfect, it has clearly been written as if it were an original piece of writing in the target language, with appropriate reorganisation of the information contained in the source text where necessary.

Aspect of Performance 3: Technical points relating to spelling, accentuation, punctuation and the transfer of dates, names, figures, etc

Merit

There are only minor technical lapses.

V Criteria for assessing translation quality: Distinction

Aspect of Performance 1: Comprehension, Accuracy and Register – the correct transfer of information and evidence of complete comprehension.

Distinction

The translation shows an excellent command of the subject matter with accurate transfer of information throughout. The choice of language and register are entirely appropriate to the subject matter and to the spirit and intention of the original.

Aspect of Performance 2: Grammar, Cohesion, Coherence and Organisation of work

Distinction

The translation reads like a piece originally written in the target language. The sentence structure, grammar linkages and discourse are all entirely appropriate to the target language.

Aspect of Performance 3: Technical points relating to spelling, accentuation, punctuation and the transfer of dates, names, figures, etc

Distinction

The spelling, accentuation, punctuation, and transfer of dates, names and figures in the translation range from excellent to faultless.

VI Using resources

When preparing for the examination

Diploma in Translation candidates must focus on:

- a. preparing to carry out a translation in examination conditions;
- b. developing professional translation skills (translation quality and speed).

Both of these activities are important for success in the examination, and they justify the use of extensive resources, although many of them are not available during the examination.

Paper resources

- Dictionaries, encyclopaedias and glossaries:
 - monolingual dictionaries (SL and TL);
 - bilingual dictionaries (general and specialist);
 - encyclopaedias (general and specialist);
 - glossaries (in the translator's own special areas).

Dictionaries have a number of drawbacks:

- . no dictionary or encyclopaedia can be comprehensive;
- . no dictionary or encyclopaedia is totally accurate;
- . entries can be misleading;
- . dictionaries, encyclopaedias and glossaries can easily become out-of-date.

- Other paper sources include:
 - . textbooks;
 - . manuals;
 - . catalogues;
 - . newspapers, magazines and journals.

Other paper resources have a number of advantages:

- . they present lexical items in context, and related items will be presented together, therefore speeding up the translation process;
- . they are much more likely to be up-to-date;
- . they are more likely to be accurate, as they will use the language of the specialisation, rather than the language that linguists (and non-specialists) feel to be correct.

Non-paper resources

Dictionaries and encyclopaedias on CD-ROM (these have the same advantages and disadvantages as paper dictionaries and encyclopaedias, but also have the advantage of speed, flexibility and access);

On-line dictionaries and terminology banks;

Web-based sources, including parallel texts and material in the TL and SL on a given topic from specialist sources;

Human sources (e.g. clients, fellow translators and specialists in the subject area).

Non-paper resources have a number of drawbacks:

- availability is never guaranteed (some online dictionaries are often down, and the technology can fail);
- accuracy is variable, as anyone – both specialists and others – can put material up on the net (general dictionaries in particular are often compiled by non-specialists);
- it can be quite difficult and/or time-consuming to get precise information from an informant;
- informants sometimes give the information they feel they ought to give, rather than the correct information. However, these non-paper resources also have some advantages:
- when on-line resources are working properly, searching and cross-checking is very quick;
- the material is much more likely to be up-to-date (some on-line dictionaries are updated on a monthly basis);
- it is very easy to get hold of material in context, and therefore obtain correct information;
- people can be invaluable for clarifying problems such as ambiguous structures, and cultural conundrums. Specialist translators might also investigate the possibility of joining a professional association that focuses on the field they specialise in. Even if full membership is not possible, these associations sometimes hold meetings and conferences that are open to the general public.

In order to develop linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge of the SL and specialist subject knowledge, sources other than standard monolingual and bilingual dictionaries should be used extensively. There is a clear correlation between, on the one hand, linguistic, cultural and specialist knowledge and, on the other, translation skills, including accuracy and speed.

During the examination

Candidates may use dictionaries and other reference works, including their own glossaries. Only paper dictionaries and other reference materials are allowed.

There are no restrictions on the paper reference materials that candidates may take into the examination room, but the time available for checking and looking words up is limited.

Therefore, for accuracy,

- always use bilingual and monolingual sources together;
- never rely on the bilingual dictionary alone;
- always use the monolingual dictionary to cross-check unfamiliar equivalents suggested in the bilingual dictionary;
- use sources which provide a context whenever possible.

And for speed,

- finger-tip familiarity with all resources used (no two dictionaries present material in the same way);
- aim at a high level of linguistic competence in the SL and the TL;

- aim at a high level of cultural and background knowledge;
- develop good basic specialist knowledge (e.g. for science, a sound knowledge of basic scientific procedures and processes is essential).

Minimum requirements

- 1 monolingual SL dictionary (one which includes proper names and acronyms),
- 1 general bilingual dictionary,
- 1 monolingual TL dictionary (one which includes proper names and acronyms),
- 1 dictionary that contains conversion tables.

A selection of recommended books

a. On good writing:

- Oxford Style Manual, OUP, 2003
- Style Guide, The Economist, 2005
- R W Burchfield (ed), Fowler's Modern English Usage, OUP, 2004
- John Humphrys, Lost for Words, Hodder and Stoughton, 2004
- Μανίνας Ζουμπουλάκη, Πώς να γράψεις (άρθρο, βιβλίο, σενάριο), Introbooks, 2007.

b. General monolingual dictionaries:

- Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 5th edition, OUP, 2002
- Collins Concise English Dictionary, Collins, 6th edition, 2006
- The Chambers Dictionary, Chambers, 10th edition, 2006
- Illustrated Oxford Dictionary, OUP, 2003
- Γ. Μπαμπινιώτη, Ορθογραφικό λεξικό της Ελληνικής Γλώσσας, Κέντρο Λεξικολογίας, 2008
- Τεγόπουλου Φυτράκη, Μείζον Ελληνικό Λεξικό, Τεγόπουλος Φυτράκης, 2002.

c. General bilingual dictionaries:

- Hyperlexikon, Εκδόσεις Σταφυλίδη, 1998
- Oxford English-Greek learner's dictionary
- Πελεκάνου, Αγγλοελληνικό και Ελληνοαγγλικό Λεξικό, Πελεκάνος, 2005.

d. Specialist bilingual dictionaries:

- Αθ. Δεληκωστόπουλου, Λεξικό Αγγλοελληνικών και Ελληνοαγγλικών Νομικών Όρων, Επτάλοφος, 2006
- Γ. Μιχαηλίδη, Αγγλοελληνικό Ελληνοαγγλικό Λεξικό των Ιατρικών Όρων, Κωνσταντάρας, 2005
- Γ. Μαρκαντωνάτου, Βασικό Λεξικό Λογοτεχνικών και Φιλολογικών Όρων Λογοτεχνική και Φιλολογική Ορολογία, Gutenberg, 2008
- Αγγλοελληνικό Ελληνοαγγλικό Λεξικό Τεχνικών & Επιστημονικών Όρων, Michigan Press, 2001
- Δ. Γ. Τσαούση, Χρηστικό Λεξικό Κοινωνιολογίας, Gutenberg, 1989
- Αθ. Μαμαλούκη, Αγγλοελληνικό Ελληνοαγγλικό Λεξικό Οικονομικών και Εμπορικών Όρων, Ζήτης, 2001
- Αγγλο-Ελληνικό Λεξικό Ψευδόφιλων Μονάδων (Athens University Press, 2005).

Specialist dictionaries can also be useful for the General Paper.

- e. Books on idioms, false friends, sayings etc:
- Stelios Marin, Lexicon of idioms and slang, Litera, 2002
 - An English-Greek Dictionary of False Friends, Athens University Press, 2005
 - Α. Ευαγγελόπουλου, Ελληνο-Αγγλικό Λεξικό Ιδιωματισμών, Παροιμιών, Ρητών, Μιχάλης Σιδέρης, 2007.
- f. Grammar books (SL for comprehension of less usual structures and features, and TL for points such as verb endings and forms, rules of agreement, word formation and punctuation):
- Romaine, Jesus Nunez, Oddities in English: For Anyone Wanting to speak English fluently but perplexed by all of the oddities in English grammar & pronunciation, Blue Ocean Press, 2008
 - Marion Field, Improve your punctuation and grammar: Master the essentials of the English language and write with greater confidence, How to Books Ltd, 2008
 - Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation by Lynne Truss, Profile Books Ltd, 2003.
 - Χ. Κλαίρη, Γ. Μπαμπινιώτη, Γραμματική της νέας ελληνικής, Ellinika Grammata, 2005

VII Translator's notes

Professional translators sometimes use translator's notes in real-life situations, for example, where a text lacks clarity and it is not possible to consult the author, or when there is need to inform a target audience of any issues (e.g. cultural matters) that may not otherwise be clear.

Translator's notes may be used in all three papers, but they must reflect their use in a professional context and provide the target readership with an explanation or resolve an issue in situ.

Please remember:

- a. Translator's notes are the exception and not the rule. They should be used sparingly, and only if absolutely necessary.
- b. Translator's notes are not meant to be an opportunity for the translator to display knowledge.
- c. Unnecessary translator's notes are likely to be penalised.
- d. In the Diploma in Translation, translator's notes should be addressed to an imaginary client and not to the examiner.
- e. Not every translation will require translator's notes.
- f. Translator's notes may appear at the bottom of the page as footnotes, at the end of the translation, or on a separate sheet. They do not need to be preceded with the heading "Translator's note(s)" (although this is standard practice in a professional context) since standard footnotes do not feature in the examination papers, and there is therefore no risk of confusion between Author's footnotes and translator's notes.
- g. Translator's notes may be used:
 - to indicate that there is / may be, an error in the Source Text (spelling error; error in dates, figures or units quoted etc). The tone of the comment needs to be diplomatic, remembering that the assumed error may not actually be an error (*Get off of my cloud* may look like ungrammatical English; it is however the correct title for the Rolling Stones song).
 - to provide necessary information for the reader (for culture-bound notions for instance) if this information cannot be provided within the body of the translation (because it would be too cumbersome, or because it would break the flow of the text).
 - to indicate an ambiguity in the text which cannot be clarified (in a real-life situation, the translator would need to consult the client or the author of the ST);
 -

Please note that a generic translator's note such as "If I had access to the Internet, I would..." is unacceptable.

Translator's notes must never be used to explain a translation problem or to justify the solution that the translator has opted for.

VIII Pitfalls

- a. Time management and organisation
 - Assuming there will be time to write a neat copy as well as a draft
 - Leaving gaps unflagged
 - Leaving alternative renderings unflagged
 - Spending too long choosing the options for Papers 2 & 3 (i.e. the semi-specialist options)
 - Changing options half-way through.

- b. Approach to the ST
 - Not taking time to read the ST carefully (ideally twice) before starting to translate
 - Not establishing the function/style/register of the ST
 - Not using the context of a word (or group of words or sentence) to understand or clarify the meaning
 - Not using, or not even having, background knowledge (e.g. of cultural or technical issues) needed to understand or clarify the meaning
 - Not understanding a syntactic structure
 - Not understanding less common grammatical words
 - Not understanding technical or scientific processes
 - Not seeing the ST from a ST-speaker's point of view
 - Not standing back from the ST to see it as a whole
 - Not considering a familiar lexical item may have a meaning other than the familiar one(s)
 - Adopting a linear approach (tunnel vision) when reading the ST.

- c. Use of resources
 - Using the bilingual dictionary exclusively to clarify the meaning of an item
 - Using the first equivalent suggested without pausing for thought
 - Not consulting an appropriate monolingual source in order to confirm a suggested equivalent
 - Not considering whether the resource used may be incomplete, incorrect or misleading.

- d. Approach to the TT
 - Leaving parts of the ST un-translated
 - Adopting a linear (tunnel vision) approach
 - Attempting to translate into the TL when writing skills are not of native-speaker standard
 - Not seeing the TT from the TT-reader's point of view
 - Not standing back from the TL in order to see it as a whole
 - Not considering issues of style, register and text function
 - Not addressing issues of cultural transfer
 - Not converting figures and units of measurement when required
 - Not editing out spelling and grammatical errors
 - Not using punctuation and TL conventions appropriately
 - Inappropriately guessing a meaning or an equivalent
 - Not checking the translation at the end for errors, flagged alternatives and good presentation.

a. Time management and organisation

- Time is at a premium in all three papers. Doing the General Paper in three hours, and the semi-specialist papers in two hours, is no easy task, particularly if things need to be looked up and resources consulted. Candidates are strongly urged not to hand in very poorly presented scripts (e.g. with untidy handwriting, scribbles, a lot of words crossed out, and arrows indicating where last minute insertions have been written). Candidates who hand in such professionally unusable scripts are likely to fail, as are those who wrongly think that they have enough time to produce a neat fair copy. Candidates are instructed to write on alternate lines. It is essential to leave time at the end for checking and proof-reading. A working definition of a *professionally usable document* might be one that can be handed to a secretary with minimal, or no, knowledge of the TL for typing.
- When translating, it is perfectly reasonable to leave difficult problems till later, and to get on with the rest of the translation first, but by spending too much time on a tricky item, the candidate may be unable to finish the translation. At all events, it is vital to flag all such gaps, as they may otherwise never be dealt with. Always remember the 5% rule leading to an automatic Fail.
- Candidates may wish to note alternative renderings that come to mind if the solution is not immediately obvious, and leave the final decision till later. However, it is vital to flag these as well, so that only one rendering remains. It is up to the candidate to choose the final rendering, not the examiner. If two or more renderings are offered, the candidate is always penalised, even if one of them is correct. Write a note in a visible place to remind you of coming back to the *flagged* items.
- Candidates have only two hours to do the semi-specialist options. That is not long. Those who spend more than ten minutes choosing between the three options may well run out of time. Very able candidates have been known to fail a semi-specialist option for this reason.
- Once the choice is made, it is extremely risky to change halfway through. Again, time is at a premium. The option should be chosen before the examination, or within the first few minutes.

b. Approach to the ST

- In order to produce a TT that is accurate and achieves the same effect as the ST, candidates must look at factors such as style and register, and determine the function of the text, and of particular elements within the text.
- The meanings of many words, groups of words and sentences are not always obvious, and often depend on the immediate or broader context. It is also wise to remember that some words can be used metaphorically rather than literally.
- Background knowledge (i.e. of the subject matter and/or cultural issues) can play an important part in interpreting the meaning of words, groups of words and sentences. In many languages, this can be particularly important when trying to work out what particular pronouns refer to.
- Texts do not consist of words simply strung together. Candidates who rely on tunnel vision when trying to understand a text are likely to make serious errors. Syntax and word order are all vital features.

- A frequent problem is the mishandling of less common grammatical words. Many candidates would benefit from a thorough study of the SL's more sophisticated grammatical features.
- Problems often arise in the semi-specialist options because candidates fail to understand processes (including very basic ones). It is essential to acquire, at the very least, a basic understanding of the rudiments of particular specialist fields before attempting to do the examination.
- Some items, elements and aspects (e.g. figures in a business text, the name of the species in a scientific text, or style in a literary text) are vital within a specific text, and poor translations are likely to result in a serious misrepresentation of the ST, and lead to a Fail.
- It is always wise to assume that one's knowledge of the ST is imperfect, and in particular that a familiar item may have a meaning which was hitherto unfamiliar – and which may not be listed in the bilingual dictionary.

c. Use of resources

- No bilingual dictionary is perfect, and the only safe way of using bilingual dictionaries is to look upon them as a source of suggested equivalents – and only when the full meaning is clear.

Where the definition of a particular word is divided into sub-entries, it is wise to check each one, even though the exercise may be tedious and time-consuming. Choosing the first equivalent suggested may be an attractive option, but it is more likely than not to be unreliable.

- Bilingual dictionaries are never perfect. They quickly get out-of-date, the entries may be incomplete (e.g. a particular meaning may have been omitted), the equivalents suggested may be incorrect, or they may be correct in one context, but not in the context described in the text.
- Unless the bilingual dictionary has reminded the translator of an equivalent that s/he knows is correct, it is essential to crosscheck in a monolingual source.
- It is essential to combine monolingual and bilingual resources, and to combine dictionaries with other resources (e.g. encyclopaedias that give lexical items in a broad context).

d. Approach to the TT

- It is remarkably easy to leave parts of the ST un-translated – words, groups of words, titles, and even whole lines or sentences. Omission of 5% or more of the text leads to an automatic Fail, so it is always worth checking and double-checking.
- Translating the ST one bit at a time may be satisfying (“Good! I've done that. I can forget about it and move on to the next bit.”), but it invariably leads to inaccuracy, and to problems of cohesion and coherence, as the translator fails to take into account what has gone before and what comes next.
- It is important to be able to work things out from the context and on the basis of background knowledge, but there are situations where guessing (e.g. the meaning of an item, or an equivalent) without checking will land the candidate in serious trouble.
- An issue here can be the ability to distinguish between false friends and the best equivalent. Some translators automatically assume that if an

equivalent is very close, it must be a false friend. This is true in some cases, but not invariably so. There are some situations where the best equivalent is the one that is the closest in form to the ST item.

- The most common problem faced by novice translators is the difficulty involved in seeing what they are writing from the point of view of the TT reader. They know what they are trying to say, but they cannot always see that the reader will understand something different.
- Distancing oneself from the TT is a vital skill, and it takes practice.
- The standard expected when writing in the TT is that of a good native user. Those candidates whose skills are not of that standard are bound to fail.
- Candidates are expected to render the source text accurately. This relates not only to the semantic content, but also to issues of style, register and function, as defined in the rubric. The importance of each of these aspects will vary according to the type of text, and where it is not possible to render all aspects, candidates will need to demonstrate that they are able to prioritise. In a literary text, for instance, issues of style may take precedence over issues of semantic content, but only if this is the best way of preserving, say, the rhythm that is an essential feature of the ST.
- Candidates need to demonstrate that they are aware of problems of culture transfer, and that they can deal with them as the context demands, using equivalents, amplification and so on as appropriate.
- Depending on the text type, failure to convert figures and units of measurement accurately and appropriately is very likely to lead to an automatic Fail.
- Only a small number of spelling and grammatical errors will be tolerated. This will include the incorrect use of accents and upper and lower case, and the incorrect use of agreements.
- Candidates are expected to use punctuation appropriately, remembering that punctuation can alter the meaning of a sentence/text. The rules of punctuation are not the same in all languages. In all texts, appropriate TL conventions must be followed in the presentation of dialogue.

IX An analysis of potential difficulties in a source text (ST)

UNIT01: GENERAL TRANSLATION (English to Greek)

For information only, not to be translated: The following text has been taken from an article by Carole Stone, published in the Guardian, on 14th May 2007 (www.observer.guardian.co.uk). It discusses networking skills in business today. Translate into your target language for inclusion in a similar publication.

Working it

TRANSLATION TO BEGIN HERE:

Good networking is making the most of the people you meet to your mutual advantage. It really is as simple as that. For me, nothing can replace the impact of a face-to-face meeting: the tiny gestures, the unexpected phrases that arise when people talk together, the germ of an idea, the hint of a worry - things you may miss online.

5 But the internet has opened up a different sort of networking that is also of great value. Now we can network across the boundaries of geography and physical proximity and connect to so many more people. Social networking sites encourage all of us to share our experiences of life - and lessons learned - with others who may be going through the same thing. You can have private one-to-one conversations or publish your wisdom for
10 an entire community.

The most important thing if you want to network - whether that's in person or online - is to take an interest in the people you meet. It encourages people to respond, to open up, and to like you.

15 Once it was your family background and education that decided whom you met. These days we're defined by the company we keep rather than our parents' profession or where we went to school, and we can keep what company we like, in person or online. Good networking is being generous with your contacts, introducing your colleagues and friends to others. Bad networkers glide into the room, head straight for the most influential person and hog their attention, before breezing out without a glance at other
20 lesser mortals.

Bad networking is wrong on many counts: no one wants to be monopolised, and no one is going to share contacts with a selfish colleague. What's more, it's self-defeating. Rather than the chief executive, it can often be the more junior people who give us a break in life: a young television researcher who finds you fascinating may suggest you to
25 a producer looking for someone to front a show; a P.A. who thinks you could be a real asset to the company may mention you to the boss. People right at the top are often far too busy to take the time to remember you.

Networking is not about relentlessly pitching an idea to some hapless soul you meet at a conference; it's about making an impression on that person by having done your
30 homework and talking intelligently about whatever topic is under discussion. It's about making sure you leave with contact details for anyone you want to keep in touch with, and following through to make an appointment before they forget you. So when you're

35 back at base, debrief. Enter details of anyone you want to meet again into your database and do anything you promised to do. Reputations are built on delivering - sending an article, forwarding someone's email address.

40 Small talk can be your secret networking weapon - something just to get the conversation flowing. Keep an eye on the news headlines, or the top films or books. These days you can talk politics and religion, but don't dive in with a really contentious subject: take it gently. And whatever you do, don't ask for free advice from the professionals: if you want to discuss your bad back with a doctor you meet, or your messy divorce with a lawyer, then take a note of name and number and make contact next day to fix a proper appointment.

Steps toward problem-solving

Lexis

Many mistakes leading to failure can occur under this aspect, as illustrated in the following examples:

making the most of people (line 1)

The expression *making the most of...* is an expression often found in English texts. Given that there is no direct equivalent in Greek, the best way of tackling the problem is by using a verb such as *αξιοποιώ*.

germ of an idea (line 4)

The picture the author wants to paint is of a seed (an idea) which is planted in people's minds. The metaphor needs to be present in the translation as well. *ο σπόρος μιας ιδέας* is an appropriate solution.

social networking (line 8)

The expression covers the main idea of the text. If its meaning is misunderstood, handling the entire text will result in misleading renderings. The best translation is *κοινωνική δικτύωση* given that the idea of networking is *socialising through the network*.

chief executive (line 24)

This is a simple, straightforward term, with an exact equivalent in Greek. It is inconceivable to be translated as anything else than *διευθύνων σύμβουλος*.

Word-for-word translation

Word-for-word translation may lead either to mistakes or to awkward structures sounding unnatural in the target language. Keeping in mind that the translation should read as an original piece, we must always be very aware of such shortfalls.

the company we keep (line 16)

This is a typical example of how things can go wrong: «η παρέα που κρατάμε» means absolutely nothing in Greek. Compare the above translation with the correct *η παρέα που έχουμε / που κάνουμε*.

bad back (line 43)

This is another example of how things can go wrong with the word-for word translation: «κακή μέση / πλάτη», means a badly behaving back rather than a back which causes problems. An acceptable translation for Greek is along the lines of *πρόβλημα με τη μέση*.

Grammar

Grammar is very important. When translating a text, we must always be mindful of particular characteristics of the target language. For example, in a similar Greek publication, a translation of this text would retain a fairly high register with consistent use of second person plural. Using the second person singular, however, would not cause as big a problem as an inconsistency and change between second person singular and second person plural.

good networking is being generous (line 18)

The sentence cannot be translated as «το καλό δίκτυο επαφών είναι γενναιόδωρο», by personifying *networking*. The gerund needs to be adjusted accurately into the Greek structure to produce, for instance, *καλή δικτύωση είναι το να είναι κανείς γενναιόδωρος*.

Register

Notwithstanding the fact that in Greek the register is in general higher, the translator must weigh this and decide to what extent this rule can be applied.

don't dive in... (lines 39-41)

«Μη μπουκάρεις» may be an accurate translation but the register is inappropriate. It is much better to use plural and an expression such as *μη μπαίνετε ξαφνικά*.

Capturing the atmosphere

This is an important element in all translations. There is a picture that the author wants to paint in this source text. A similar picture should be painted (by using the appropriate translation techniques) within the target text.

Bad networkers glide into the room, ... before breezing out without a glance... (lines 19-21)

The idea of people aiming straight for the most influential person, having monopolised their attention and leaving without bothering with anyone else needs to be transferred in Greek. So, careful consideration must be given to how the sentence begins (*τα άτομα που δεν δικτυώνονται καλά*), as well as the structure and the ending of the sentence to avoid a linear and stilted translation.

take it gently (line 42)

«με το μαλακό» is a translation which both lowers the register and fails to produce the intended result of the original. *προχωρήστε σταδιακά*, or even *περάστε στο θέμα διακριτικά*, on the other hand, captures the atmosphere and produces the desired result.

Guesswork

This is a common trap for the unwary, and particularly so in an exam situation working under stress and time constraints.

The germ of an idea (line 4)

This expression cannot be translated in this context as «μικρόβιο», although the word could be an accurate translation in a different context. An accurate rendering could be as mentioned above, *ο σπόρος μιας ιδέας*.

back (line 43)

Cannot be translated as «πλάτη», although the word could be an accurate translation in a different context. Here the only acceptable solution would be the word *μέση*

Footnotes

It must be stressed that footnotes do not need to appear in order to state the obvious. The above text, does not call for them and statements such as “If I had the appropriate resources or time I would have translated XXX, which in this instance was left untranslated” are unacceptable.

UNIT 02C LITERATURE (English to Greek)

For information only, not to be translated: The following text has been taken from the opening pages of Automated Alice, the novel by Jeff Noon, first published in 1996. The book is an updated version of the children’s classic Alice in Wonderland. Translate into your target language for publication in an anthology of fantasy literature.

Automated Alice

TRANSLATION TO BEGIN HERE:

5 Alice was beginning to feel very drowsy from having nothing to do. How strange it was that doing absolutely *nothing at all* could make one feel so tired. She slumped down even deeper into her armchair. Alice was visiting her Great Aunt Ermintrude’s house in Didsbury, Manchester; a frightful city in the North of England which was full of rain and smoke and noise and big factories making Heaven-knows-what. ‘I wonder how you *do* make Heaven-knows-what?’ thought Alice to herself. ‘Perhaps they get the recipe from somebody who’s only recently died?’

10 The thought of that made Alice shiver so much that she clutched at her doll ever so tightly! Her Great Aunt was a very strict old lady and she had given Alice this doll as a present with the words, ‘Alice, the doll looks just like you when you’re in a tantrum.’ Alice thought that the doll looked *nothing* like her at all, despite the fact that her Great Aunt had sewn it an exact (if rather smaller) replica of Alice’s favourite pinafore; the splendidly warm and red one she was currently wearing. Alice called the doll *Celia*, nor really knowing the reason for her choice. Alice would often do things without knowing why, and this made her Great Aunt very angry indeed: ‘Alice, my dear,’ she would pronounce, 15 ‘can’t you make sense for once?’

20 Alice now hugged the Celia Doll even closer to her chest, where she wrapped it in the folds of her pinafore: this was all because of the lightning that was flashing madly outside the window, and the November rain that was falling onto the glass, sounding very much like the pattering of a thousand horses’ hooves. Her Great Aunt’s house was directly opposite a large, sprawling cemetery, which Alice thought was a horrible place to live.

25 But the very worst thing about Manchester was the fact that it was – oh dear! – *always* raining. ‘Oh Celia!’ Alice sighed to her doll, ‘if only Great Uncle Mortimer was here to play with us!’ Great Uncle Mortimer was a funny little man who would always have a treat tucked away for Alice; he would amuse her with jokes and magic tricks and the magnificently long words that he would teach her. Great Uncle Mortimer was, according to her Great Aunt, ‘big in the city’, whatever that could mean. ‘Well,’ said Alice to the doll, ‘he may well be *big* in the city, but when he gets back to his home he’s really rather 30 small. Perhaps he’s got two sizes, one for each occasion. How splendid that must be!’ Great Uncle Mortimer would spend every night smoking on his pipe whilst adding huge

rows of numbers, and wolfing down a great plateful of the radishes that he grew for himself in the vegetable garden.

Steps toward problem-solving

Lexis

The following are some positive steps to problem-solving:

clutched at (line 10)
αγκάλιασε (σφιχτά)

tantrum (line 13)
νευράκια or ξέσπασμα οργής

sprawling (line 25)
εξαπλωμένο άτακτα / ακανόνιστα

Word-for-word translation

Great Aunt (lines 3-4) and *Great Uncle* (line 29)

This is also a cultural issue. In Greek, παππούς and γιαγιά for great uncle or aunt are normally used in Greek. The translation «μεγάλος θειος» or «μεγάλη θεία» is unacceptable and misleading. Here a footnote could explain the difference. Also a good solution for the translation would be *θεία ενός από τους γονείς της*.

ever so (lines 10-11)

The translation «ποτέ έτσι», which is word-for-word, does not work here. The correct translation should be (*πάρα*) *πολύ*.

Grammar

lightning (line 22)

This word is singular in English. However, from the sentence structure and the context we must use the plural *αστραπές* in Greek.

Tenses sometimes pose a problem given that it is not necessary to use, for example, past perfect when translating an English sentence into Greek.

was beginning to feel (line 1):

For this expression, a simple past is the correct solution: *άρχισε να αισθάνεται*.

False friends

radishes (line 38) means *ραπανάκια* and not «ραδίκια».

Careless reading

sighed (line 28): careless reading can lead to translate it as “signed”. In this particular case, however, even the context would help in avoiding such a serious mistake.

recipe (line 7) could with careless reading been translated as *receipt*.

Capturing the atmosphere and using the right register

The piece throughout talks about a little girl and the way she thinks and imagines things. The language is straightforward and the register low. These characteristics also need to be evident in the source text. For example,

Alice, my dear (line 18) should be translated as *Αλίκη, αγαπητή μου*, rather than «αγάπη μου» or «αγαπούλα μου», in order to reflect the formal way the elderly woman addresses the little girl.

wolfing down (line 38) should be translated as *καταβροχθίζοντας*, rather than «χλαπακιάζοντας», in order to reflect the way a polite little girl would think, and to keep the appropriate register.

Guesswork

she slumped down (line 3)

The easy solution from guessing is to offer the translation «βυθίστηκε» instead of the correct *σωριάστηκε*. Consulting the dictionary will confirm the right translation.

pinafore (line 15)

From the context, «φόρεμα» could be guessed, but it would miss the cultural reference of a more traditional way of dressing little girls with *ποδίτσα*.

Footnotes

Great Aunt (lines 4, 5) and *Great Uncle* (lines 29)

In Greek, we normally use the word *παππούς* and *γιαγιά* for great uncle or aunt. In this particular case, a footnote could explain the difference.

pinafore (line 15)

A brief description of a pinafore could facilitate the reader to understand what this item of clothing looks like.

X. In brief

The Diploma in Translation examination requires careful preparation and adequate knowledge and experience in translation.

During the exam,

- careful reading of the original text,
- attention to technical mistakes,
- adequate but not excessive time to use dictionaries,
- reasonable timing for the translation,
- attention to simple mistakes that can easily be missed,
- enough time to go over the translation at the end and
- an effort to give a legible and well-formatted script

will help the candidate offer a good piece of translation, which will lead at least to a pass.