

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

**A seminar for
candidates and course providers**

November 2007

Preface

This Diploma in Translation pack is based on a seminar that took place in London at the Institute of Linguists Educational Trust (IoLET) in November 2007. The seminar focused on:

- the criteria used for assessing translation quality;
- the use of resources, both when preparing for the examination and during the examination;
- common pitfalls when doing a translation in examination conditions.

The languages used for illustrative purposes are English and Spanish, but all examples are presented in such a way that they can be understood without a detailed knowledge of Spanish. A number of the examples were offered by the November seminar participants, to whom the IoLET is accordingly grateful.

We hope that the advice and ideas set out here will be of interest both to tutors and to candidates preparing for the examination in any language combination.

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Introduction

As with any other professional examination, the Diploma in Translation (DipTrans) requires highly focused preparation. Two key aspects are involved:

- learning how to translate to the appropriate level – preparation for the examination, not just language learning;
- sitting the examination fully prepared – knowing what it's really like: the difference between preparation and the real thing.

The techniques involved in working on these two aspects are closely related, but they are by no means identical:

- on the one hand, no translator can expect to pass the Diploma in Translation if s/he is not a good translator;
- on the other hand, a good translator will not necessarily pass the examination, or perform to the best of his/her ability.

It is essential, therefore, to consider both of these aspects together when preparing for the examination.

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

It is self-evident that a competent/good translator must be able to understand and handle all of the grammatical features of both the source language and the target language. Linguistic knowledge is a fundamental requirement, but it is not enough on its own: it must be supplemented by sound cultural knowledge, as well as subject-area knowledge, particularly for the semi-specialist options. Candidates must be aware of their limitations: many experience serious difficulties because their background knowledge is inadequate.

Preparation for the examination therefore must involve the building up of:

- the ability to write well in the target language in all relevant subject areas;
- a detailed knowledge and command of all of the linguistic features of both the source language and the target language;
- a genuine interest in the source language and the source culture;
- fluent use of translation technology (where relevant);
- sound cultural knowledge;
- good subject area knowledge.

Good cultural and subject-area knowledge can be achieved in a number of ways:

- carrying out detailed research on background points when doing practice translations (i.e. by using dictionaries, encyclopaedias, reference books and the Internet, and by talking to informants);
- visiting the country or countries where the source language is spoken (for translators not living there);
- visiting the country or countries where the target language is spoken (for translators not living there);
- reading books, newspapers, magazines and specialist publications regularly (the *New Scientist* and the *Economist* are two high-profile UK publications, and *Scientific American* is a top-class US American journal, but there are many, many more);
- watching television programmes (immensely useful for picking up contemporary idiom) and films;
- reading books about the country or countries where the SL is spoken (for translators not living there), and about the country or countries where the TL is spoken (for translators who do live there); books in English on Spain include:
 - . Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth*, Canto, reprinted 2003;
 - . Jon Cowans (ed), *Modern Spain – A documentary history*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003;
 - . Peter Pierson, *The History of Spain*, Greenwood Press, 1999;
 - . Christopher J Ross, *Contemporary Spain*, Hodder Arnold, 2nd edition 2002;and those on the UK might include:
 - . Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, Macmillan 2007;

- . Norman Lowe, *Mastering Modern British History*, Palgrave, 3rd edition 1998;
- . Rebecca Fraser, *A People's History of Britain*, Pimlico 2004.

Improving translation skills is a gradual process:

- start with easy materials, and gradually move on to more challenging material;
- work slowly and thoroughly at first (over-check rather than under-check).

If time is limited, doing 30% of a translation thoroughly is much more productive than trying to struggle through the whole text, and producing a poor translation. Only good, experienced translators can work at speed and under pressure.

Translators should only consider attempting the Diploma in Translation when they can produce quality translations systematically. Those who always try to produce their practice translations in the time allocated in the examination stand little chance of improving. However, as far as the examination itself is concerned, candidates must bear in mind that they will be working:

- in unfamiliar surroundings and conditions;
- at speed;
- in a stressful situation.

These problems of stress and speed are very similar to the conditions encountered in professional situations, where clients sometimes make unreasonable demands regarding speed and the quantity of work to be produced. Speed combined with quality comes with practice, but the basic principle should be:

1. quality;
2. speed.

The unfamiliarity of the surroundings and conditions will affect stress levels (e.g. there is no opportunity for a coffee break, or for a quick run round the block to clear the brain). It will also affect the candidate's approach to the translation, in particular because of:

- time constraints;
- the limited space available for working (e.g. a small desk and no shelves);
- restrictions on resources;
- the non-availability of a computer;
- the possibility of having to produce a handwritten script.

Candidates need to prepare themselves by practising in examination conditions: this includes doing translations with pen and paper, translating against the clock (i.e. strictly in the time allowed, and with no breaks), and 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 (e.g. constraints on time, space and resources (paper only); no helping hand from the teacher; and handwritten (as appropriate)).

The Diploma in Translation examination is a fairly gruelling experience, and calls for mental stamina. Candidates should arrive in adequate time to prepare themselves.

Both when learning to translate to the appropriate level and preparing for a specific examination, candidates will find many useful tips in:

- Douglas Robinson, *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:

- *Diploma in Translation. Handbook and Advice to Candidates*, IoL Educational Trust, 2006.

This important publication, which may be downloaded free of charge from the [IoL](#) website, contains a wide range of immensely useful information for all the Diploma in Translation candidates, and is compulsory reading.

I The criteria for assessing translation quality: General Principles

The Diploma in Translation examination assesses and rewards basic professional competence in translating any language combination. Most candidates translate into, or out of, English, but the IoLET also runs examinations in combinations that do not include English.

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 style 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 they must also 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:

- respect any originality in the source text (ST) (e.g. syntax and vocabulary) and
- 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'?

- Candidates should not think they are expected to produce a so-called 'flawless' translation.
- Some editing is expected.
- Position envisaged: that of the reasonably competent junior translator.
- The seriousness of errors in relation to specific contexts (i.e. a given error can be serious in one context and minor in another).
- Approaches such as gist translation, broad/loose semantic translation and adaptation are not acceptable.

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

- Not all native speakers write well – some native speakers write better than others.
- Native speakers who normally write well do not necessarily write well when translating (this is quite common).
- Native speakers write some types of text well, and others not so well.
- Native speakers might also have problems with SL interference.
- 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?

- 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?

- Establishing the function of the text
- Establishing the style of the ST
- Establishing the register of the ST
- Seeing the ST from the ST reader's point of view
- 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 *vasos sanguíneos* 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

Collocation: This is one of the more difficult notions for a language learner to come to grips with. It refers to the specific environment in which a particular word or group of words normally functions. For example, the phrase *librar una batalla* means 'to fight a battle'. A native Spanish speaker would understand *combatir una batalla*, but the collocation is *librar una batalla*.

Colloquialism: This does not necessarily refer to familiar language. Colloquialisms are set expressions that are often, but not always, impossible to translate literally. Spanish has *El amor es ciego*, which translates conveniently as 'Love is blind', but while the phrase *¡Te estás quedando conmigo!* usually means something like 'You're staying with me!', on hearing something unbelievable, a Spaniard might say it to mean 'You must be joking!'

False friends: These 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 Spanish include *soluciones eventuales* ('possible solutions', although *eventual* is typically rendered by recasting the sentence), *decepción* ('disappointment'), *actualmente* ('currently, at the moment'), *estoy embarazada* ('I'm pregnant') and *estar constipado/a* ('to have a cold').

Metaphors: This is 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'). These can cause particular difficulties when trying to understand the ST. The word *rey* means 'king', but when *El País* refers to the British Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton as *El rey de la pista*, it means that Hamilton is a (or the) top driver. Sometimes, though, a metaphor does 'translate' fairly easily: *correr como un diablo* translates as something like 'to run like a devil', although a native English-speaker would more likely say 'to run like the devil'.

Phatic language: This 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. *¡Hola!* and *Hí!*).

II The criteria for assessing translation quality: A 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 serious lapses of spelling and with some errors in punctuation.

III The criteria for assessing translation quality: A 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 inaccuracies, both major and minor, 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

Serious errors that may lead to a Fail. In a professional context – indeed, in any context – mistakes are simply wrong, and they can have serious consequences. For instance, they can:

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

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

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

Another instance. In a text reporting 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 *de por lo menos 40 años de edad* 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 The criteria for assessing translation quality: A 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 The criteria for assessing translation quality: A 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 are faultless.

VI Using resources

When preparing for the examination

Diploma in Translation candidates must focus on:

- preparing to carry out a translation in examination conditions;
- 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).

These have a number of drawbacks:

- . no dictionary or encyclopaedia can be comprehensive;
- . no dictionary or encyclopaedia is totally accurate;
- . entries can be misleading;
- . they can easily become out-of-date.

Other paper sources include:

- textbooks;
- manuals;
- catalogues;
- newspapers, magazines and journals.

These 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

Non-paper resources include:

- 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).

These 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.

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.

Speed

- Finger-tip familiarity with all resources used (no two dictionaries present material in the same way)
- A high level of linguistic competence in the SL and the TL
- A high level of cultural and background knowledge
- 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)

A selection of recommended books

- 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;
 - . *Libro de Estilo*, El País, 2002;
 - . *Gran Diccionario de Uso del Español Actual*, SGEL, 2001.
- Generalist 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;
 - . *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, Spanish Royal Academy, 22nd edition, 2001.
- Generalist bilingual dictionaries:
 - . *Collins Spanish Dictionary*, HarperCollins, 8th edition, 2005;
 - . *Oxford Spanish Dictionary*, OUP, 3rd edition, 2003.
- Specialist monolingual and bilingual dictionaries:

- . Henry Saint Dahl, *McGraw-Hill's Spanish and English Legal Dictionary/Diccionario Jurídico Inglés-Español*, McGraw-Hill, 2004;
- . Mónica Ortiz Sánchez & Virginia Pérez Pino, *Diccionario Jurídico Básico*, 2nd edition, Tecnos, 2004;
- . *Philip's Science and Technology Encyclopaedia*;
- . *Oxford Business Spanish Dictionary*, OUP, 2002;
- . Federico Beigbeder, *Diccionario Técnico Inglés-Español Español-Inglés*, Díaz de Santos, 2nd edition, 2006;

But not just for relevant subject areas: specialist dictionaries are often useful, for example, in the General Paper.

- Books on idioms, false friends, sayings etc:
 - . David Burke, *Street Slang Spanish Dictionary & Thesaurus*, John Wiley & Sons Inc, 1999;
 - . Peter Weibel, *The Big Red Book of Spanish Idioms*, McGraw-Hill, 2004.
 - . Andrew Coney, *Diccionario de Dudas y Falsos Amigos (ES>EN only)*, Espasa, 2004;
 - . Luis Junceda, *Diccionario de refranes, dichos y proverbios*, Espasa, 2006;
 - . Renaud Richard (ed), *Diccionario de Hispanoamericanismos*, Cátedra, 3rd edition, 2006.
- 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).

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*.

- Translator's notes are the exception and not the rule. They should be used sparingly, and only if absolutely necessary.
- Translator's notes are not meant to be an opportunity for the translator to display knowledge. Unnecessary translator's notes are likely to be penalised.
- In the Diploma in Translation, translator's notes should be addressed to an imaginary client and not to the examiner.
- Not every translation will require translator's notes.
- 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.
- Translator's notes may be used:
 - . to indicate that there is, or may be, an error in the ST (e.g. a spelling mistake, or an error in dates, figures or units); given that the assumed error may not actually be one, the tone of the comment should be diplomatic;
 - . 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);
 - . when a specialist equivalent cannot be traced, given the resources available in the examination room; in these circumstances, the candidate needs to indicate the specific source(s) that could be consulted in order to solve the problem (e.g. a specific online dictionary, a website or a specialist). A generic translator's note such as 'If I had access to the Internet, I would...' is insufficient;
 - . to provide necessary information for the reader (e.g. in the case of culture-bound issues) if this information cannot be provided within the body of the translation (e.g. because it would be too cumbersome, or because it would break the flow of the text).
- 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

1. 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

2. 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

3. 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

4. Approach to the TT

- Leaving parts of the ST untranslated
- 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 TT 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

1. 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 advised, but not 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.
- 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.

2. 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.

3. 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).

4. Approach to the TT

- It is remarkably easy to leave parts of the ST untranslated – 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. **Delete 'result in'; substitute 'lead to'**.
- 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, that some rules of punctuation are compulsory (although others are optional), and that these rules 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)

PAPER 01: GENERAL TRANSLATION (Spanish into English)

For information only, not to be translated: This piece, by the Spanish journalist Javier Cuervo, appeared in the magazine section of La Vanguardia in July 2006. The text is a semi-humorous commentary about the popularity of football compared with that of reading. Translate into your target language for inclusion in the weekend leisure supplement of a quality newspaper.

TRANSLATION TO BEGIN HERE:

El fútbol es de minorías

Hay un feo hábito cultureta de enfrentar el fútbol y la lectura en desigual partido, olvidando que el gusto por el fútbol es muy transversal y no niega el aprecio por la literatura. Al revés, tampoco, pero la hinchada tiene a favor que la secretaría de estado de Deportes es muy considerada y no se pasa el día reprochando a millones de españoles que no vean ni un solo partido al año o no sepan recitar una alineación. Se lee poco, es cierto, pero los lectores de una ciudad llenarían un estadio si acordaran reunirse en tal lugar cada domingo a partir de las cinco de la tarde. A fin de cuentas, ¿qué ven los aficionados? ¿Un par de partidos por semana? Menos de 200 minutos de fútbol.

A estas alturas del Mundial de fútbol, espero no haber visto ningún partido. Cuando se dice que el fútbol interesa a todo el mundo se miente. La audiencia que sigue los grandes partidos del año rara vez supera los nueve millones de espectadores, lo que deja a la hinchada en minoría: a 31 millones de españoles el fútbol les da igual. Este Mundial está fuera del alcance de 4.000 millones de personas. ¿Qué media de audiencia logrará globalmente? No llegará a la mitad más uno de la audiencia posible. El fútbol es pasión de minorías - lo que justifica su interés general - y por eso me produce simpatía.

El fútbol es concentración y la lectura, dispersión. Es normal que los lectores no se reúnan en campos de fútbol y de agradecer que la televisión no retransmita un espectáculo tan estático. Desde que no se lee en los refectorios ni en los talleres de costura, desde que hay millones de títulos a disposición para una lectura en bajo, en la intimidad y cuando venga la gana, los individualistas lectores han desarrollado un sentido minoritario por el que les resultaría repugnante que su afición se manifestara con modales futbolísticos. ¿Pertenece usted a la Peña Kenzaburo Oé Oé Oé? ¿Le gustaría que los seguidores de Paul Auster rompieran farolas, volcaran contenedores y se bañaran en las fuentes públicas para celebrar que ha acabado una novela? ¿Acudiría con un bombo para atronar en las presentaciones de Mario Vargas Llosa? ¿Se ve haciendo la ola ante una edición crítica de "Marinero en tierra"? No.

En el fútbol todo son colas. Para sacar la entrada, para acceder al campo, para salir. A la cola le siguen el embotellamiento y la caravana. El lector detesta hacer colas, ese fracaso de la distribución que sólo anima a editores y libreros en septiembre para los libros de texto y en el nuevo curso de "Harry Potter". De esas dos ocasiones sólo la de "Harry Potter" tiene entusiasmo lector, pero, aun con la cursilería del barniz cultural, los padres preferirían no tener que estar aguantando cola para que el crío compre otra historia del mago miope, aunque estén encantados de que lo quiera tener, de que lo lea y de que cada volumen sea más gordo. El entusiasmo librero queda enturbiado con los libros de texto por el debate anual del precio fijo. Yo no haría cola ni por un inédito de Raymond Chandler, pero no se puede decir que no haya hinchada literaria. ¿Los lectores que hacen cola en la feria del libro para que el escritor les dedique el ejemplar hacen algo muy distinto de los que piden a Beckham que les firme una camiseta?

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Lexis

- I 2 *transversal*
A wonderfully rich Spanish word, but one that is notoriously difficult to translate – ‘transversal’ would be ‘translationese’, and comes nowhere near it. (*Transversal* is also a false friend.) The word needs to be opened up. Perhaps something along the lines of ‘... appeals to a broad spectrum of people’.
- I 11 *A estas alturas del Mundial de fútbol*
‘At this stage of the World Cup’ – the author was writing while the competition was still taking place.
- I 20 *retransmita*
There may be a temptation to use the verb ‘to broadcast’ (or even ‘transmit’, at a pinch), but a more idiomatic phrase such as ‘... is not shown on television’ is better.
- I 32 *el embotellamiento y la caravana*
‘traffic jams and tailbacks’
- I 34 *el nuevo curso de “Harry Potter”*
‘the latest “Harry Potter”’. Nothing to do with a ‘course’.

Passim hinchada

The word *hinchada* (‘fan club’) occurs quite often, and repetition of ‘fan’ is not ideal. It is worth remembering that footballers and writers both have ‘fans’, although only the former have ‘supporters’.

Word-for-word translation

- I 2 *olvidando*
It isn’t a question of ‘forgetting’, if only because there is no person referred to in the sentence to forget anything. Better to ‘explain’ what people are doing: ‘... but that ignores the fact that football appeals to a broad...’.
- I 35 *sólo la de “Harry Potter” tiene entusiasmo lector*
The use of the verb ‘to have’ (for *tiene*) is weak, and close to inaccurate. A verb that collocates well with ‘enthusiasm’ is ‘arouse’: ‘... arouses enthusiasm among readers’.

Failure to spot grammatical constructions

- II 19-20 The word *Es* at the beginning of the sentence governs both halves: *Es normal* and *Es [...] de agradecer*. However, that is not to say that it should be translated in the same way: the first part of the sentence could go ‘It is not surprising that readers do not meet in football grounds...’ and the second half ‘... and we should be grateful that a static spectacle of this kind is not shown on television’.

False friends

- I 2 *transversal*
See ‘Lexis’ I 2.
- I 5 *considerada*
The Sports Ministry is ‘considerate/thoughtful’, not ‘highly regarded’ in this context.
- I 33 *editores*
‘publishers’, not ‘editors’.

I 36 *barniz*
'veneer' in this context, not 'varnish'.

I 40 *inédito*
An 'unpublished work'. Nothing to do with editing.

Register

I 14 *a 31 millones de españoles el fútbol les da igual*
Important to pitch the indifference correctly and appropriately. Something like 'couldn't care a damn' may be accurate, but the English is inappropriate here, and 'don't mind' is probably too mild. Best might be something closer to '... don't mind one way or another', or 'for 31 million Spaniards, it is a matter of supreme indifference.'

Capturing the atmosphere

I 1 *Hay un feo hábito cultureta de enfrentar el fútbol y la lectura en desigual partido*
'Ugly' for *feo* doesn't work in English, and it isn't a 'habit' either – more like a 'tendency'. Perhaps 'an unpleasant (or unattractive or cheap, or grubby) tendency'. There is also a need to start the passage with something more striking than 'There is'. Perhaps 'People have an unpleasant...'

I 5 *la secretaría de estado de Deportes [...] no se pasa el día reprochando a millones de españoles que no vean ni un solo partido al año*
This sentence typifies the gentle irony of the whole piece. It calls for something more humorous than 'criticising', let alone 'reproaching', for *reprochando*: 'admonishing' would work, and 'ticking off' might be even better: 'The Sports Ministry doesn't spend all day admonishing/ticking off millions of Spaniards for not watching even one football match a year...'

I 9 *A fin de cuentas*
Again, the irony and mock desperation need to be captured. As the article points out, people don't read all that much, but all of a city's readers could fill an entire stadium if they set their mind to it and agreed to meet there every Sunday from 5.00. But come on, says the author; is football really any different? 'When all is said and done / Let's face it, how much football does fans actually watch?'

II 11-12 *Cuando se dice que el fútbol interesa a todo el mundo se miente*
Something literal like 'When people say that everybody likes football...' is limp. Use of the snappy English phrase 'Anybody who tells you... is lying' is greatly preferable.

II 26-27 *¿Le gustaría que los seguidores de Paul Auster rompieran farolas, volcaran contenedores y se bañaran en las fuentes públicas para celebrar que ha acabado una novela?*
It is more than a question of 'Would you like Paul Auster fans to break street lights, overturn dustbins and?' There is a need to capture some of the ridiculousness of the idea: 'Would you really like Paul Auster fans to go around smashing street lights, overturning dustbins and...?'

I 31 *En el fútbol todo son colas*
One of the differences between football and reading is the queuing, and the 'incorrect' grammar of the sentence catches some of the flavour. Something like a word-for-word translation (something like 'In football everything is queues') would sound pedestrian; the contrast with enthusiasm for reading might be reflected in something along the lines of 'Football is all about queuing: queuing for a ticket, queuing to get into the ground and queuing to get out again.'

II 35-36 *la cursilería del barniz cultural*

This is a complex phrase, difficult not least because of the culturally rich *cursi/cursilería*. An imaginative rendering might redistribute two of the words thus: 'a veneer of cultural pretentiousness'.

- II 36-37 *Los padres preferirían no tener que estar aguantando cola para que el crío compre otra historia del mago miope*
The playful irritation can be captured by imaginative translations of *crío* ('child') and *aguantando cola* ('waiting in a queue'): 'parents would prefer not to have to hang around in a queue while their little dears bought another story of the short-sighted wizard.'

Cultural issues

- I 3 *la secretaría de estado de Deportes*
The phrase 'Secretariat of State for Sport' is very awkward, and 'Sports Ministry' or 'Ministry for Sport' would be much more natural. Furthermore, one might think it was odd for the Sports Ministry (let alone the 'Secretariat of Sport') to be running round ticking people off for not going to watch football matches. Much better to imagine the Minister him/herself (not) doing it.
- II 8-9 *si acordaron reunirse en tal lugar cada domingo a partir de las cinco de la tarde*
It would be inappropriate to 'anglicise' these details (e.g. '... if they agreed to meet every Saturday afternoon at 3.00'): the normal day (Sunday) and starting time (5.00 p.m.) should be preserved. Many readers of the 'quality newspaper' referred to in the rubric may be expected to know when football matches are played in Spain.
- I 25 *Peña Kenzaburo Oé Oé Oé*
A cultural issue, but this time not wholly an English/Spanish one. *¿Pertenece usted a la Peña Kenzaburo Oé Oé Oé?* means 'Would you join the Kenzaburo Oe Fan Club?', that is to say the fan club of the Japanese novelist Kenzaburo Oe. In Spanish, Oe's name is sometimes spelled with an accent on the 'e' (i.e. 'Oé'), and the author evokes football chants by writing the name three times. Translators who are aware that native English-speakers give Oe's name two syllables, and simply put 'the Kenzaburo Oe Fan Club' get away with it.

Footnotes

- II 29-30 *'Marinero en tierra'*
Candidates may wish to provide some information on this work in the form of a parenthesis in the body of the translation or as a footnote, but they must provide accurate information. Those who assumed that *Marinero en tierra* is by Mario Vargas Llosa (II 28-29), and said so, were trying to cut corners. They were accordingly penalised. *Marinero en tierra* is by the Spanish poet Rafael Alberti (1902-1999).

PAPER 2B: BUSINESS (Spanish into English)

For information only, not to be translated: The following press release concerns an agreement between the CECA and an Austrian banking group. The text was published on the website of the Confederation on 24th June 2006. Translate into your target language for the English version of the website.

TRANSLATION TO BEGIN HERE:

La Confederación Española de Cajas de Ahorros (CECA) y Raiffeisen International Bank-Holding AG (Raiffeisen International, miembro del grupo austriaco RZB y el mayor grupo bancario en Europa Central y del Este -ECE- presente con más de 2.700 sucursales y diez millones de clientes) han firmado un acuerdo de colaboración en virtud del cual Raiffeisen International prestará servicios financieros además de en Austria, en dieciocho países de ECE a empresas españolas clientes de Cajas de Ahorros.

El convenio se enmarca dentro del Plan de Internacionalización puesto en marcha por la CECA en abril de 1998 y complementa otros acuerdos ya firmados con entidades de Alemania, Francia, Luxemburgo, Reino Unido e Iberoamérica.

En virtud del presente acuerdo, Raiffeisen International pone a disposición de los clientes de las Cajas a través de sus subsidiarias bancarias y financieras (compañías de leasing, seguros, desarrollo de proyectos, fusiones y adquisiciones, etc.) en cada uno de los dieciocho países de ECE, una amplia gama de productos y servicios financieros con una atención personalizada y una estructura operativa en cada país, ofreciendo servicios bancarios de alto valor añadido en una de las áreas geográficas de mayor interés para las empresas españolas. Entre ellos se encuentran: financiación a corto y largo plazo de sus proyectos empresariales en esos países; asistencia en sus operaciones de comercio exterior; consecución de informes comerciales; asistencia en la implantación de filiales y compra de empresas; apertura de cuentas de exportador; transferencia de pagos para beneficiarios en los países de ECE; tramitación de órdenes comerciales y emisión de garantías locales así como la ejecución de créditos documentarios.

Las ventajas para las Cajas que se derivan de este acuerdo-marco se concretan en la posibilidad de disponer de una atención personalizada a través de un único interlocutor para los dieciocho países de ECE además de Austria, que les permite poder ofrecer sus productos y servicios a sus empresas cliente y tener un mayor contacto con la realidad económica y comercial internacional.

La firma de este acuerdo contribuye a extender la asistencia a clientes en mercados de interés económico para las Cajas, añadiéndose a los que ya tiene la CECA firmados en Latinoamérica con Citibank y en países europeos con otras redes de Cajas de Ahorros o entidades internacionales de primera línea como Lloyds Bank en el Reino Unido. En resumen, la CECA cubre 44 países que suponen una red de 35.000 sucursales, siendo el objetivo final de la CECA la cobertura mundial, dando siempre prioridad a los mercados considerados por las Cajas como estratégicos para su negocio.

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Lexis

- II 4-5 *acuerdo de colaboración*
'cooperation agreement' or 'partnership agreement'.
- I 7 *Cajas de Ahorros*
The phrase *Cajas de Ahorros* will, or should, already have been translated on I 1 ('Spanish Confederation of Savings Banks (CECA)') alongside the full Spanish name (*Confederación Española de Cajas de Ahorros*). This frees the translator to put 'Savings Banks' here on I 7, and also on II 12, 24, 30, 32 and 35. A repetition of the Spanish phrase (*Cajas de Ahorros*) is also permissible as long as the English equivalent has already been clearly stated.
- I 10 *entidad*
Much more common in Spanish than its English cognate 'entity'. A good example of how translators need to have a good grasp of the subject-matter: 'organisations' or 'institutions'.
- I 11 *presente*
The article is not referring to the 'present agreement' but, quite simply 'this agreement'. See also 'Word-for-word translations' I 3.
- I 25 *atención personalizada*
The phrase 'customer care' is so well established in English that there is a good case for working it into the translation here, but strictly speaking, 'customer care' is what banks give us, or should do; what the banks provide clients and customers with is 'personalised service'.
- I 26 *interlocutor*
A notoriously awkward word for into-English translators, particularly if their knowledge of the subject area is poor. Here, the best equivalent is 'partner'.
- II 26-27 *sus*
That little word *sus*, and here used twice on the same line: ... *que les permite poder ofrecer sus productos y servicios a sus empresas cliente...* (emphasis added). The first *sus* refers to the 'partner' (*interlocutor*) and the second to the 'Savings Banks' (*Cajas de Ahorros*). Translators also need to bear in mind that *les* just before *permite* also refers to the Savings Banks. The sentence may be re-assembled along the following lines: 'This enables Savings Banks to offer their partner's products and services to their client firms...'

Careless reading

- II 13-14 *compañías de leasing, seguros, desarrollo de proyectos, fusiones y adquisiciones etc*
There are all different kinds of company: leasing companies, insurance companies, project development companies and so on. 'Leasing companies, insurance, project development...' is quite wrong, and is an example of a careless 'tunnel vision' approach to translation
- II 14-15 *una amplia gama de productos y servicios financieros*
'a wide range of financial products and services' and not 'a wide range of products and financial services' (*financieros* modifies both *productos* and *servicios*). Scope again for the 'tunnel vision' approach to translation.

Long sentences

- II 1-7 Long Spanish sentences frequently pose problems for into-English translators. This sentence must be broken down into two shorter ones, with the parenthesis on II 2-5 forming the second (new) sentence.

