From Occasional Quality Control to Collaborative Quality Assurance

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Abstract

If you want to overcome occasional quality control and to establish a coherent quality assurance system for your translations, you need to think holistic in terms of incorporating all possible stakeholders. Furthermore, you have to keep it simple so occasional users do not get frustrated and stop their valuable co-operation. It also might be a good idea to use some features known from social media in order to boost motivation and participation.

1   Introduction

Quality is always an issue in the translation business. While almost everybody would agree with this statement, the definition of quality itself remains heavily disputed.
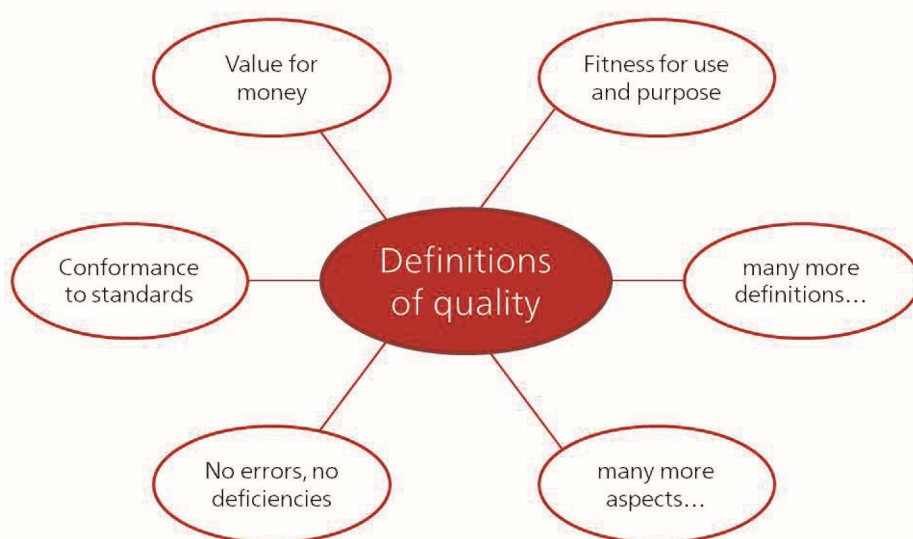

Figure 1: How to define "Quality"

In a "normal" translation production scenario, quality assurance is often seen as a post-translation step, including things like the "usual" quality assurance (QA) checks with or without tools or line-by-line checking of the product via in-country review. The problem is that these are spot-checks, often done by poorly trained or stressed-out reviewers. Maybe that is why the Common Sense Advisory (CSA) recently stated the review process to be notorious in causing delays and frustration for all parties (LSP, client, reviewer).

2   Quality and Standards

So, what is quality really? One way to approach this issue is by means of standards, such as ISO 17100. This rather new standard defines translation processes and not linguistic quality that lies in the nature of these documents as they were originally developed for manufacturing businesses. The growing interest in quality management has brought specific quality standards for translation services, e.g., the Italian UNI 10574, the German DIN 2345, the Austrian Önorm D 1200 and Önorm D 1201, the EN 15038, or the Canadian CAN CGSB 131.10. Nevertheless, only F2575-06 from ASTM (the former American Society for Testing and Materials) indicates a possible direction: "The degree to which the characteristics of a translation fulfill the requirements of the agreed-upon specifications (3.1.45)".

So, the first step towards achieving a measurable and traceable quality is to define the requirements.

2.1   TAUS and QT21

This is where TAUS and its Dynamic Quality Framework comes in. This approach defines quality by means of content profiles and also sets the expectations for each of them. In addition, QT21, which stands for quality translation 21, provides a set of rules to actually measure this expected quality.

QT 21 has developed "Multidimensional Quality Metrics" (MQM) as "a framework for describing and defining custom translation quality metrics. It provides a flexible vocabulary of quality issue types, a mechanism for applying them to generate quality scores, and mappings to other metrics. It does not impose a single metric for all uses, but rather provides a comprehensive catalog of quality issue types, with standardized names and definitions, that can be used to describe particular metrics for specific tasks."[1]

In a subset, the MQM even contains TAUS' DQF Error Typology. DQF stands for Dynamic Quality Framework and provides additional tools and methods as well that are useful for evaluating quality, e.g. content profiling.

The special combination of TAUS' DQF and QT21'S MQM provides a solid framework which now, in turn, needs an appropriate system.

2.2   The System That is Fit for Quality

The system needs to be a collaborative workspace environment. And we propose to embed it within the review process step. As Tim Martin, a senior staff member of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation, pointed out in an article for the Journal of Specialised Translation[2], review "alone is an imperfect art and can never ensure that an intrinsically bad product will be rendered flawless. Nor indeed should it be seen merely as a form of corrective action. Its real strength and investment value is as a feedback tool that allows its results to be channelled back into the whole cycle of translation production in order to eliminate or reduce problems at source. Only when that happens can one claim that risks and resources are well managed."

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[1] As documented on http://www.qt21.eu/quality-metrics/
[2] Tim Martin, Directorate-General for Translation (European Commission): Managing risks and resources: a down-to-earth view of revision, in: JOST – Journal of Specialised Translation, Issue 08, http://www.jostrans.org/issue08/art_martin.php

By applying the quality framework, using a collaborative workspace environment in the review process, we do not only actively involve the in-country subsidiaries, but also

- • Define the quality required for each content type

- • Stop "correcting" translations

- • Instead, assess quality (using sampling where needed)

- • Track the quality

- • Involve them in the processes before, during and after translation, such as terminology or strategic quality improvement measures such as training

2.3   Conclusion

This helps us raise quality to a strategic and more objective level. We simply have to try to get away from finger pointing on some stand-alone document and towards a long-term tracking of quality and more transparency. Implementing the above mentioned action points will lead to valuable business intelligence in terms of translation quality, its stakeholders, and resources.

References

ASTM F2575-06 Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation

DIN 2345

EN 15038

ISO 9001

QT 21 MQM as provided on http://www.qt21.eu/quality-metrics/

TAUS DQF as provided on www.taus.net

Tim Martin, Directorate-General for Translation (European Commission): Managing risks and resources: a down-to-earth view of revision, in: JOST – Journal of Specialised Translation, Issue 08, http://www.jostrans.org/issue08/art_martin.php