



## A matter of balance

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### 0. Introduction

Have you ever heard about translation competence (TC)? Hurtado (2003: 43) defines it as the "Underlying system of knowledge and skills necessary to translate."

Kelly (2002: 15) establishes seven sub-competences comprising the TC:

- I. Communicative and textual.
- II. Cultural.
- III. Thematic.
- IV. Instrumental/professional.
- V. Psycho-physiological.
- VI. Interpersonal.
- VII. Strategic.

The instrumental/professional sub-competence encompasses the following aspects:

- Instrumental: terminology management, information sources management, Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and working tools.
- Professional: accounting, taxes, and legal aspects and market situation.
- Ethical: ethical issues and involvement in professional associations.

In this article, emphasis will be given to the first aspect. More information can be found in Dal Dosso: 2014. Examples will be given for the English <> Spanish language pair.

### 2. Instrumental

Before accepting a translation job, you should know your working capacity and must be familiar with the tools you are going to use.

These four documents are crucial for the success of any translation project:

- I. Glossary. I suggest that you use an Excel spreadsheet to prepare your glossaries, like in the following example:



Acronym	English	Español	Acrónimo
LAN	Local Area Network	Red de área local	RAL

The glossary will contain the main terms —nouns, verbs, acronyms— present in the text to be translated. Terminology is key to achieve technical quality.

II. Style guide. It is the strategic tool to achieve quality assurance and describes the most significant aspects of a translation project translators should observe. Example: how to use punctuation marks.

III. Black list. It is a list of the words that may not be used in a project. Example: in the case of computer, “ordenador” should be used for Spain; but “computadora”, for Argentina.

IV. Query form. It is used to communicate with the Project Manager (PM) and the rest of the team to make questions. Example: how to translate the term billion: “mil millones” or “millardo”?

Regarding information management, below you will find some useful sources:

- Conference proceedings.
- Dictionaries and glossaries.
- Encyclopedias and thesaurus.
- Governmental agencies (web sites).
- Grey literature (not easily found through conventional channels).
- Libraries.
- Localization guides.
- Monolingual and bilingual corpuses.
- Official gazettes.
- Reference books.
- Science academies.
- Specialized journals.
- Style manuals.
- The Internet.



These are the most widely used ICTs used in the translation process:

- File compression, conversion and transfer programs.
- Graphic design tools.
- Instant messaging programs.
- Internet browsers.
- Multimedia players.
- Project management applications.
- Software localization programs.
- Spreadsheet software.
- Subtitling programs.
- Translation memory (TM) software.
- Voice recognition software.
- Web content management software.
- Word count applications and processors.

In addition, these working tools can make you translation job more efficient:

- Bibliography. Make a list of the books you have on your shelves. This includes dictionaries, glossaries and reference books.
- Bookmarks. Bookmark those Internet websites you frequently visit (Dal Dosso: 2008).
- Confidentiality agreement, to outsource jobs.
- Contact lists. It should include: clients, colleagues, government agencies, subject matter experts, suppliers, other professionals (accountants, lawyers, IT engineers), etc.
- Cover letter, to introduce yourself to new customers.
- Fees. Make a list of the different type of services you offer.
- Model Contract. State here your terms and conditions.
- My Glossary (bilingual). Make a list of the terms you frequently look up in dictionaries.
- My Style Guide (monolingual). Prepare a short list of those language doubts you usually come across. Example: how to use bullets in Spanish.



- Passwords. In case you do not remember all your passwords, make a list, save it on your computer in a difficult-to-find but easy-to-remember directory, print it and keep it in a safe place.
- Purchase Order (PO), in case your provider does not have a ready-made one.
- Quotation. The main items that should be present in this document are: date, quotation number, job details (example: from English into Spanish; contract in a Word document of 5,000 words), fees, deadline, remarks (example: to be delivered in PDF format), payment terms, offer validity term.
- References. Before providing any name, talk about this with the person who will give any reference of you.
- Resume/CV. Suggested information: contact data (+ photo, if applicable), studies, language pairs, areas of expertise, IT skills & resources, main projects by area, published translations, memberships, daily output/availability.
- Templates. Have a template for the most usual documents you work with: contracts, birth certificates, transcripts, etc.
- Translation samples. You can also post them in your website.

This is how you can arrange your documents on your PC, in "My documents":

2016

- Forms (PO)
- Certified translation templates
- Resumes
- Translations
  - Client A
    - Translation samples

After reading all these lists containing resources and tips, you may have wondered: "Why all this?" The answer is quite simple: quality.

As a translator, all your training, skills and energy should aim at quality. The client wants quality; the client needs quality; the client deserves quality. As a professional, you should be able to provide quality.

Quality is a subjective term. However, to understand it better, I propose five viewpoints from which you can approach quality:



- I. Linguistic quality. It is the result of your language mastery.
- II. Extra-linguistic quality. The level of your subject matter knowledge will impact on the extra-linguistic quality.
- III. Technical quality. The more accurate and consistent the terminology, the better the technical quality.
- IV. Esthetic quality. Format.
- V. Functional quality. Mainly related to IT (websites, videogames, localization). It also refers to cultural functionality.

In my article "Quality Training for Quality Performance" [*Una formación de calidad para un desempeño de calidad*] (Dal Dosso: 2009), you will find more information on quality aspects.

## **2. Professional**

As per this second aspect, remember that (Dal Dosso: 2005):

- Professionals are people who train themselves to make each day a better job.
- What they knew until yesterday is not enough.
- They search beyond books.
- They research not only to spell their doubts.
- They do their job with a touch of class.
- They spend their time wisely.
- They know how to manage their relations so that the benefit is reciprocal.
- They perfect their method until they simplify it.
- They do all the things once and in the right way.
- They have a different style of living. So, what is the difference between an amateur and a professional? Attention to detail.



### 3. Ethical

Last but not least: Walk your talk!

This means:

- Do what you say. If you committed to deliver your translation at a certain day and time, do it as promised.
- Say what you do. Promote yourself. Every person you meet should know that you are a translator.
- Be able to prove it.

### 4. Conclusions

Before accepting a translation project, make sure that you:

- know the subject;
- have ALL the resources you need to do the job; and
- will be able to deliver the level of quality the customer expects to get.

Remember: **It's a matter of balance.**

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