

## Introduction for all readers

This book aims to provide guidance and learning materials for two groups of users. The first group consists of translation students and professional translators who wish to improve their ability to check and amend their own translations ('self-revision') or translations prepared by others ('other-revision'), whether these translations were generated directly in a translator's mind or with the assistance of Translation Memory or Machine Translation. The second group is made up of translation students who are learning to edit original writing by others, especially by authors working in their second language.

One aim of the book is to encourage you to *think about revision*, not just do it. Thinking about revision is important because that will force you to think about translation *quality*.

Revision is essential because every translator makes mistakes, often big mistakes. Also, national and international translation standards recognize that every translation should be self-revised after it's drafted, and that some if not all translations should be revised by a second translator.

*In this book, revising means reading a translation in order to spot problematic passages, and then making or recommending any corrections or improvements that are needed to meet some standard of quality. A source text in another language is always available for consultation.*

*Editing is this same reading task applied to texts which are not translations, or texts which happen to be translations but are checked and corrected as if they were original writing, with no reference to a source text in another language.*

Revising and editing are first and foremost exercises in very careful reading. You can't correct errors until you've found them! It's very easy to simply not notice problems. *The purpose of revision is not to make changes; it's to notice problems. A reviser's most important skill is the skill of spotting problems while reading.*

Revision is done by people such as employees of a translation agency who check translations done by contractors, or two freelance translators who check each other's work. Editing work is done by non-translators such as a publisher's copyeditor or a freelance editor, or by people who happen to be translators but have been commissioned to act as editors.

Self-revision, other-revision and editing have much in common. They all involve checking linguistic correctness as well as the suitability of a text's style for its future readers and for the use they will make of it. Much of what you do when revising is identical to what you do when editing. Whether you are editing original writing or revising a translation, you may decide to amend an awkward wording, for example. In either case, you have to make sure that you do not change the author's meaning while eliminating the awkwardness. That said, there are of course differences. Revisers will often come across wordings that are unidiomatic as a result of interference from the source language—a problem which editors will encounter only if the writer is not a native speaker of the language of the text. Revisers must also find and correct mistranslations and omissions—parts of the source text that were overlooked when the translation was drafted.

Another thing revising and editing have in common is that they are simultaneously linguistic and business processes. They are governed not just by language conventions but also by considerations of cost-effectiveness. If you make your living in part by revising or editing, then you will not be able to think only of linguistic quality; you will also need to think about how many words you are getting through per unit time. These two aspects, you will discover, are not infrequently in conflict.

One can imagine a definition that covers both revising and editing: reading any existing wording and deciding whether to make changes. However, despite the above similarities, 'reviser' and 'editor' are not really parallel terms. Both words can be used simply to refer either to someone who happens to be checking and amending a text, or else to someone whose function it is to do so, but 'editor' is more commonly used to name a profession. In many countries, there are editors' associations which are quite separate from writers' associations, but there are no revisers' associations separate from translators' associations. 'Reviser' is not the name of a profession; the activity or function of translation revision has developed historically as part of the profession of translator, though some translators may spend much or even all of their time revising. The relationship between writer and editor is therefore different from the relationship between translator and reviser, which might be better described as a relationship between the drafting translator and the revising translator.

In addition, in some countries, translators and editors live in completely separate professional worlds, with little contact between translators' and editors' organizations. In other countries, they have close professional relationships, and translators' and editors' organizations may have overlapping memberships: it may be unusual for someone to be a translator and not also an editor.

As will be seen in Chapter 2, a professional editor may engage in a huge range of tasks, from finding authors to discussing typographical details with printers. An editor may decide to recommend or insist on changes which would fall outside the purview of a translation reviser: delete whole sections, or rewrite them with new content. The treatment of editing in this book, however, is restricted to a fairly narrow range of activities: copyediting, stylistic editing and certain aspects of structural and content editing. The selection of editing topics, and the amount of

attention accorded them, is governed by a simple principle: to the extent that an editing skill is also needed by revisers of translations, to that extent it is included. That is why this book is entitled *Revising and Editing for Translators*, and it is a feature that distinguishes the book from other treatments of editing.

When translation students graduate, they may find—depending on their language pair and the local translation market—that they cannot earn an adequate income from translation alone. They will be in a better position if they can accept related work such as editing or technical writing. Many people today do several kinds of work. A native English speaker resident in the Netherlands may translate from Dutch to English, revise Dutch-English translations, edit material written in English by Dutch speakers, and write original English material for Dutch companies.

Employers often want to hire ‘translator-editors’, reflecting the fact that in organizations such as corporations and ministries, translation production is integrated into the general process of producing print and electronic documents. Here are descriptions of two translator-editor positions in Canada, the first in a government agency, the second at a science centre:

Translate, revise, standardize and re-write public and internal documents such as reports, announcements, decisions, ministerial orders, brochures, press releases, memos, etc. for employees and managers of the Agency. Coordinate requests for translation and revision for the Agency. Coordinate the preparation of briefing notes for the Minister and, when the responsible person is absent, of ministerial and executive correspondence.

Research, write, edit French copy related to scientific technological exhibits and programs for visiting or virtual public. Produce small publications, write for websites, copyedit, translate English material with extensive scientific content into clear, interesting, understandable French copy and meet deadlines.

The editing sections of this book should be of use to anyone who will be doing work of the sort just described. As for the revision sections, they will assist students in degree or diploma translation programs, practising translators who are assigned to revise others, and self-learners who wish to accept freelance revision work. The revision part of the book may also prove instructive to people who manage translation services but are not themselves professional translators.

Professionals who have a degree in translation may recall their teachers telling them how important it is to check their translations, that is, to self-revise. But if they look back at their textbooks, they will see that little or no substantive advice is given about just how to do this. They may never have learned any actual principles or procedures for self-revision. If they have been practising professionals for some time, they will have developed some procedure or other, but they may never have formulated it and looked at it critically. Is it achieving the desired purpose, and just what is that desired purpose?

The same applies to revising others, and to setting up or implementing quality control systems. It is important to think about the concepts involved (Just what *is* quality?) and about the procedures that will be used to achieve quality. New revisers tend to waste a great deal of time making unnecessary changes in texts. If they are to overcome this problem, and be able to decide what is necessary and what is not, they must clearly formulate in their minds the goals of revision.

In day-to-day work, of course, one proceeds to a great degree without conscious thought. As one revises or self-revises, one does not think: now I shall consider point 5 on my style checklist, and now I shall go on to point 6. However, if you have reason to believe that your procedures are not catching errors, or if you think (or your supervisor thinks!) that you are taking too long to check a text, then perhaps you need to bring your procedures to the mental surface—spell them out and then consider them in the light of certain principles. This book is intended to help you do so.

### **Translating by revising**

With the spread of Translation Memory, learning to revise translations by other people is becoming more important than it used to be. Memories typically contain translations prepared by a large number of other translators. When material from these databases is imported into the translation on which a translator is currently working, he or she must decide to what degree the imported wording is useable in the current context. It may be necessary to make changes for a variety of reasons: the meaning of the imported material is somewhat different from the meaning of the current source text; the imported material is stylistically inconsistent with the translator's own wordings; there is a lack of cohesion between an imported sentence and the previous or following sentence; different imported sentences are not consistent with each other in terminology or phraseology. When a great deal of material is imported from the memory's database, the task of translating becomes, to a great extent, an exercise in revising other people's wordings rather than an exercise in composing sentences in the target language. Translators who use Memory thus need to develop a reviser/editor mentality rather than the mentality of a text composer.

While the above tasks need to be performed even when importing material from a Memory that contains nothing but the translator's own previous translations, the revision burden is greater when importing wordings written by others since there is far less certainty about the reliability of the work done by the other translators. There may be pressure on translators to use the imported wordings in order to save time, even though corporate memories are notorious disseminators of mistranslations. In any situation where there is a growing volume of material that needs translating, but an insufficient number of translators, there will inevitably be a tendency to modify the concept of what counts as acceptable final quality in order to reflect what the translators are able to achieve with the assistance of the particular technologies they are using.

Aside from Memories, translators working in many language pairs and genres now have access to editable Machine Translation output, and this too calls for people to revise wordings that are not their own.

### **What this book is not**

The book is not intended to form the self-editing component of a writing course. The users of the editing chapters are, after all, students in a professional language programme. Presumably they are already quite good at writing in their own language, and good writing of course requires good self-editing. In the revision part of the book, however, self-revision is included because many working translators are not efficient self-revisers, and also because very little has been written about the practical details of self-revision.

This is not a workbook. Many chapters end with descriptions of exercises, and a few include exercises on short sentences or sentence fragments. However there are no complete texts, for that would have made the book much longer (and more expensive!), and my text selection might not have been found suitable by many instructors. Additional exercises will, however, be made available at the Routledge Translation Studies Portal and more will be added as time passes, including full-text exercises and, I hope, revision and editing exercises in languages other than English.

The book presumes a basic knowledge of grammar. It does not explain what a subordinate clause is, or give instruction on how to identify the subject of a sentence. When editing and revising the work of others, it is often necessary to explain why a change has been made, and that calls for some knowledge of grammatical structure and terminology. All translation students would be well advised to take an introductory course in linguistics, for this will give them concepts and terms with which to think about and talk about language.

The book is not a guide to writing do's and don't's. It offers no advice on the correct use of semicolons, on how to avoid sexist language, or on whether a sentence can begin with 'and'. These, and a thousand and one similar issues, are the subject of innumerable writers' handbooks that can be found on the reference shelves of most bookstores. Naturally the exercises in this book call for a knowledge of these substantive matters, but the body of each chapter focuses on principles and procedures.

The book is not a review of the problems of translation. In the course of revising, one is faced with the need not merely to identify errors but also to correct them. To do so, one obviously needs to have the full range of text-interpreting, researching, composing and computer skills that are required of a translator. These matters are discussed only to the extent that they apply in a special way to the revising process as opposed to the translation drafting process.

The book does not cover the creation of a visual form for the text: desktop publishing and page layout of text and graphics are not discussed. Certain matters of visual presentation are mentioned briefly, such as consistency in typography and in the form and placement of headings and subheadings, but the production of the

physical print or on-line document containing the translation is beyond the scope of this book. There is also no coverage of the processes of marking up a manuscript (nowadays usually a Word file) for the printer and checking the printer's output (nowadays often a .pdf file).

The book is not concerned with the editing of literary texts or the revision of literary translations. Literary texts can conveniently be defined as fictional or non-fictional writing in which named individuals engage in self-expression on their own behalf. Part of the value of such texts often lies in the particular linguistic forms selected. A non-literary text by contrast is typically anonymous, or else written by a named individual on behalf of an institution, and the linguistic form is of no value in itself; indeed, in current English, the ideal with such texts is for the linguistic form to be transparent—unnoticed by the reader—except with marketing materials. The checking and amending of literary translations takes place within a commercial publishing environment that differs from that of the translation departments and agencies within which non-literary texts are revised.

With one exception, the book does not cover the various kinds of adaptation, which deviate from the norms of accuracy and few additions/few subtractions that usually govern non-literary translation. This sort of work is done under various names: transcreation (of advertising), localization (of websites, software and video games, with attendant technological complexities), trans-editing (of news reports) or even translation (of Wikipedia articles, which often involves a good deal of original writing). Trans-editing is discussed in Chapter 7.

The book is not a review of revision research (though see Appendix 6). When the first edition appeared in 2001, there was only a small amount of writing about revision, mostly in professional translators' publications rather than in scholarly journals. As for empirical research, there was a small amount about self-revision but next to nothing about other-revision. That situation has certainly changed. However, this edition of the book, like the previous three, essentially presents my own views on the subject, which derive for the most part from my 38 years of experience as a reviser in the Canadian Government's translation service. While I have been influenced by the writings of others, I only occasionally mention these or consider differences of opinion (the only significant one concerns the validity of unilingual re-reading: some people think comparison of the translation with the source text is always essential; I do not). As with the previous editions, the views of others can be found in the readings listed at the ends of most chapters.

Insofar as the book is concerned with pedagogical matters, it's with the pedagogy of revision, not the pedagogy of translation. Students in translation practice courses are sometimes asked to revise each other; the purpose however may not be to acquire revision competency but rather to become a better translator by seeing how others translate. Also, translation instructors grade students' translations and this typically involves identifying errors and sometimes correcting them, but this does not count as revision as understood here, and will not be discussed.

Finally, the revising and editing work associated with audiovisual translation and social media translation is mentioned only in passing because I have no experience with such work.

## **Principles and procedures**

### ***Principles versus rules***

This book approaches both editing and revising as exercises not in rule-following but in the intelligent application of principles. Neither editing nor revising is straightforward. There are indeed clear-cut cases of right/wrong, but there are many more cases where it is up to you to decide, and for this you will need principles.

Principles are simply guides to action. An example would be the principle of minimizing changes: if in doubt about whether to make a change in the text, don't. You might also think of principles as things you do 'in principle', that is, things you do by default, unless the situation suggests doing something else. 'Follow the paragraphing of the source text' might be a principle in this sense for many language pairs. It is not a 'rule'; when you are revising, you may find that there is a good reason to change the paragraphing.

### ***Formulating procedures***

Aside from principles, the main thing you need in order to be a successful editor or reviser is procedures. It is all very well to have a list of error types, but if your procedure does not succeed in finding the errors, the list is not much use.

Eventually, procedures will become second nature, but the point of studying revision and editing is to formulate them. This book aims to help its readers answer, or at least think about, questions such as the following: In what *order* should I carry out editing and revising tasks? Is it always necessary to compare the translation with the source? And given that one can go on perfecting a text endlessly, when should I *stop*?

### ***Principles and language pairs***

Do the same principles apply to editing in all languages, and to revision in all language pairs? Many do, but editing work in particular will differ from language to language because the linguistic culture of a society will dictate certain emphases; problems of a certain type will be deemed important that may seem quite unimportant in another language community. For example, if one society is moving out from under the influence of a formerly dominating other society, reduction of the linguistic influence of that other society may be seen as an important aspect of editorial work. Also, one linguistic culture may currently be in a phase where a 'plain style' is the ideal in non-literary texts, whereas another culture may currently prefer a more ornate style. This will obviously affect the work of editors; for example, the concept of readability, discussed in Chapter 4, may differ if an ornate style is preferred.

A further important point is that two editors may be working in different linguistic cultures even though both of them use the same name for their language. In other words, the factors affecting editing work may differ depending

on whether you are in Dublin or Sydney, in Paris or Montréal, in Lisbon or São Paulo. Obviously if you are editing texts for publication in another country, you will need to make appropriate adjustments. For example, Canadians submitting material to American or British publications may have to edit out Canadian spellings and substitute American or British spellings. To outsiders, the Canadian system looks like a combination of British and American spellings—‘honour’, not ‘honor’; but ‘organize’, not ‘organise’. To Canadians, it is simply the way we learned to spell our language as children. It is also of symbolic importance—one small way in which we English-speaking Canadians distinguish ourselves from the Americans. Defending the local identity of texts is often an important part of the work of editors and revisers.

The editing sections of this book are very heavily oriented toward the linguistic cultures of countries where the great majority of the population are native speakers of English. For the most part, it is assumed that the texts are written by native speakers and are being edited for reading by native speakers. The special problems of editing texts written in English by non-native speakers will be discussed in Chapter 2, but other cases (texts written for a readership that consists mainly of non-native speakers; texts written in the French-influenced Euro-English of the institutions of the European Union) will be mentioned only in passing. Those who will be editing material written in languages other than English may find that some of what is said about English here is relevant to them because English writing habits are increasingly having an effect on how people write in other languages.

The revision sections of the book are probably more universally valid than the editing sections. Again, though, emphases will vary. If translated texts are widely used in a society, an important function of revisers may be to eliminate any traces of foreign influence. In a society where translated texts do not play such a great role, source-language influence on the wording of the translation may be more tolerable.

The revision sections of the book will be applicable when the target language is the self-reviser’s second language, or when the source language is the source-text author’s second language, or when revising translations of translations. However, little attention will be paid to the special additional problems of these cases, such as the difficulty of assessing idiomaticity when the self-reviser is not a native target-language speaker. For those who are advanced learners or near-native speakers of English, self-revising English is much easier than it was in the pre-computer era because they can check wordings of which they are uncertain with the help of computer programs (see Chapter 9), and because there are now good advanced learner’s dictionaries which provide vital information that is not given (because it is assumed to be already known) in dictionaries aimed at native speakers.

## **Outline**

The book begins with a consideration of why editing and revising are needed in the first place, and of what quality is (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 concerns the work done by people employed as editors. This is followed by four chapters (3–6) devoted to



the various kinds of textual amending work: copyediting, stylistic editing, structural editing and content editing. Chapter 7 is about large-scale structural and content editing by journalists who translate (some translation students may become journalists!). Chapter 8 is concerned with the question of how much consistency an editor or reviser should seek to achieve, and Chapter 9 with computer aids for editors and revisers. Chapter 10 looks at the work of people who function as revisers. It is followed by three chapters that look at the following questions: What are the features of a draft translation that may require revision (Chapter 11)? To what degree should I revise a translation (Chapter 12)? What procedures should I use to revise (Chapter 13)? Finally, Chapter 14 looks at self-revision, Chapter 15 at the problems of revising others, and Chapter 16 at the revision of machine outputs. The book closes with a list of readings, an index, and six appendixes: a review of key ideas about revision, a brief look at systems for assessing the quality of translations, a method for marking exercises, a sample revision, a glossary of editing and revision terms, and an overview of empirical studies of revision.

### **New in this edition**

For this fourth edition, aside from checking, correcting, improving and updating the entire third edition, I have asked two colleagues to write new chapters on topics that were mentioned only briefly in previous editions: Chapter 7, by Jungmin Hong, is about trans-editing while Chapter 16, by Carlos Teixeira, is about fixing translations generated by Machine Translation and Translation Memory. In Chapter 1, there is an expanded treatment of the notion ‘fitness for purpose’. In Chapter 10, there is a new section on reviser competencies. In Chapter 11, I have added two parameters to the original twelve in order to take into account client specifications and employer policies, and I have rewritten the sections on the Completeness and Tailoring parameters. In Chapters 4 and 12, I have redefined the terms ‘clear’ and ‘intelligible’. Appendix 3 offers a completely new grading scheme for revision and editing assignments, and Appendix 6 a discussion of revision issues requiring research. The Introduction for Instructors includes a revision course outline as well as an expanded treatment of professional development workshops on revision. Finally, there are very brief treatments of a few topics not covered in the previous editions, such as editing of User Generated Content (Chapter 2), uniformity among revisers and crowd-sourced revision (Chapter 10).