Applying Translation Quality Standards to a Certification Procedure for U.S. Language Service Providers

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Capstone Project for

Master of Liberal Studies

November 15, 2011

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Abstract

Many translation quality standards have been implemented to regulate the provision and procurement of language services. However, in the absence of a standardized procedure to certify U.S. language service providers (LSPs), the industry lacks consensus with regard to requirements, procedures, and expectations. This project establishes the need for such a procedure and proposes an LSP Certification Procedure based on existing quality standards. Through a review and analysis of existing translation quality standards, an interview with a key stakeholder, and the presentation of an LSP Certification Procedure, this project concludes that the U.S. language services industry requires a procedure to certify LSPs and that such a procedure may be designed and implemented based on existing standards.

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Introduction

The British Standards Institute defines a standard as "a document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context" (BSI 2011). Quality standards benefit consumers in a variety of industries by ensuring that services will meet certain pre-established criteria. For example, anyone who wishes to hire an electrician in the state of Colorado would find that the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) provides an array of rules and regulations for the provision of electrical services (2011). In this case, industry standards create a sense of confidence that critical services will be provided in a safe and reliable fashion. In the same manner that an unregulated electrical industry would lead to unpredictable or unsafe services, unregulated professional translation of legally binding contracts, patient information leaflets, or other critical documents can also have costly or dangerous consequences. Nevertheless, the U.S. language services industry currently has no standardized procedure for certifying language service providers (LSPs) (Yunker 2010).

Problem Statement

The U.S. language services industry is currently plagued by a lack of consensus in a number of crucial areas. First, in the absence of any minimum requirements for providers, the barriers to entry in the industry

are so low that there are tens of thousands of individual LSPs serving the market and clients are left to sort through a deluge of improbable promises of "the highest quality" at "the lowest price" with little formal regulation to guide them (Yunker 2010). Second, given that U.S. LSPs range in size from individual professionals to multinational corporations, there is tremendous variation in the resources, practices, and procedures used to carry out translation projects. Finally, a lack of public awareness of what is required to produce accurate translations of industry-specific documents has also created tremendous variation in price and quality expectations for professional language services. Therefore, in light of the lack of minimum requirements for LSPs, the absence of standard procedures for translation projects, and the lack of consensus on price and quality expectations for professional translation services, the U.S. language services industry requires a standardized procedure to certify language service providers.

Goals and Objectives

The objective of this project is to propose a standardized procedure for certifying LSPs suitable for the U.S. language services industry. Accomplishing this objective requires first proving that the industry has a need to certify LSPs, and then demonstrating that it is practical to design and implement such a procedure based on existing translation quality standards. This is done through a review of current quality standards, an

interview with a key stakeholder, and finally, by proposing an LSP Certification Procedure based on existing translation quality standards.

Literature Review

The language services industry can be defined in a number of ways according to which related services are included in the definition. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau's North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) defines Industry NAICS 54193, Translation and Interpretation Services, as "establishments primarily engaged in translating written material and interpreting speech from one language to another," while another common definition places languages services within the globalization, international, localization, and translation (GILT) industry (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). In light of the existence of so many different definitions, it comes as no surprise that there is also a wide variation in the statistics available on the size of the language services industry. For example, a 2005 study found that estimates of the language services industry varied from 3-30 billion USD annually according to which related services were included in the definition (Wooten 2008). For the purposes of this project, the term language services industry will be used to refer to the translation profession along with its related services and the term language service providers (LSPs) will be used to refer to the companies or individual professionals who provide translation services. Interpreting services are not addressed in this project.

Review of Translation Quality Standards

If we consider that the reason clients seek translation services in the first place is because they lack the ability to communicate in a given language, it naturally follows that clients are not usually in a position to judge how accurately a translation conveys the ideas and intentions of a source document (Stejskal 2006, 12). As such, standards have been created to ensure clients that translation services will meet certain minimum quality standards. However, defining what constitutes a quality translation proves to be somewhat more difficult than it would first appear. How do we go about determining the quality of a given translation? Is a literal translation that preserves the exact terminology and grammatical structures of a technical data sheet of higher quality than a creative translation that presents a work of literature with more artistic license? How can we compare the quality of one translation to another? Given that it is impractical to measure the quality of a translation through subjective criteria, translation quality standards measure quality through objective criteria that ensure that the linguists who perform a translation have the necessary qualifications, that proper procedures and practices are followed, and that the final product meets certain pre-established criteria (Stejskal 2006, 12).

Within the context of the language services industry, provider-oriented standards regulate the individual linguists who perform the translation, product-oriented standards regulate the quality of the deliverable, and

process-oriented standards regulate the procedures, practices, and tools employed during the translation process. The following review illustrates how these three types of standards regulate the U.S. language services industry.

Provider-Oriented Translation Quality Standards

The overwhelming majority of LSPs in the United States are individual translators rather than translation companies. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's quinquennial statistics, in 2007 the U.S. language services industry was comprised of 38,075 non-employer establishments, or individual freelance translators, and 1,975 employers, or translation companies (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). While LSPs may be individual freelance translators or translation companies, provider-oriented standards always apply to the individual linguist who actually performs the translation, regardless of whether he or she works as a freelance translator or on staff at a translation company.

The purpose of a provider-oriented translation quality standard is to ensure that a translator possesses not only language competency in the source and target languages, but translation competency and subject-matter competency as well. Language competency refers to a mastery of the source and target languages and may be acquired through a degree in a foreign language or a number of years of residence in a country where the target or source language is spoken. Translation competency refers to knowledge of translation processes, techniques, and technologies, and may be obtained by

earning a degree in translation or through training in translation tools or techniques. Finally, subject matter competency refers to the level of professional experience or education required in a specific field in order to translate industry-specific texts with the language and terminology suitable for a particular context.

Provider-oriented translation quality standards generally entail certification of an individual translator by a professional organization, government body, or academic institution (Stejskal 2006, 12). Professional organizations that certify translators include the American Translators Association (ATA), the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council (CTTIC), and the U.K. Chartered Institute of Linguists (IoL). Examples of government-issued certifications include the Defense Language Proficiency Test and the United States Foreign Service Language Test. Finally, academic accreditations include non-degree professional certifications such as the Certificate in Translation offered by Arizona State University, graduate-level certifications such as the Certificate in Advanced Translation Studies offered by the University of Denver, University College, master's degree programs such as the M.A. in Translation offered by the Monterrey Institute for International Studies, as well as doctoral programs such as the Ph.D. in Translation Studies offered by Kent State University.

The most widely recognized provider-oriented translation quality standard in the United States is the ATA certification exam, in which

translators are required to obtain a pre-determined score on a standardized translation test in order to receive ATA certification (Schiaffino and Zearo 2006, 53). According to the ATA, "certification offers qualified and independent evidence to both translator and client that the translator possesses professional competence in a specific language combination" (ATA 2011). The ATA certification exam assesses language competency through a written translation test in a specific language pair, it assesses translation competency with strict accuracy criteria, and it assesses subject matter competency with test passages taken from specific disciplines.

Product-Oriented Translation Quality Standards

Product-oriented standards assess the quality of the final translation product through a statistical assessment of the number of errors per specified amount of text (Stejskal 2006, 12). Examples of product-oriented standards include the Translation Quality Metric developed by the Society of Automotive Engineering (SAE J2450), the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) QA Model, as well as the Translation Quality Index developed by Riccardo Schiaffino and Franco Zearo.

SAE J2450 applies to translations of automotive service information into any target language and is applied regardless of the source language or method of translation, whether it be human translation, computer assisted translation, or machine translation. However, according to the SAE, this standard does not address style issues and so is not suitable for evaluating

translations in which style may be an important factor, including automobile owner's manuals or marketing materials (SAE International 2011).

The LISA QA Model is comprised of a customizable set of templates, forms, and reports that provide a list of tasks to be performed by reviewers as well as error categories and a predefined list of severity levels, weights, and metrics used to assign a Pass/Fail grade to localized content (Stejskal 2006, 16). The Lisa QA Model is widely used by LSPs and clients to manage quality assurance of localization projects, and according to 2006 LISA survey data, approximately 20% of all companies that carried out localized product testing used the LISA QA Model, making it the most widely-used QA metric in the localization industry at that time (Decision Support Systems Resources 2011). However, LISA has since been declared insolvent and dissolved, creating the need for a new mechanism to replace it in assessing localized content (LISA 2011).

In *Developing and Using a Translation Quality Index*, Riccardo Schiaffino and Franco Zearo outline how a quantitative quality assessment tool may be used to count errors in a random sample of a translation in order to provide a measure of its quality (2006, 53). Schiaffino and Zearo's Translation Quality Index (TQI) classifies translation errors as errors of meaning, errors of form, and errors of compliance. Errors of meaning are inaccuracies or mistranslations that are detected by comparing the source text with the target text, which can be major if they result in a translation

that varies significantly from the source, or can be minor if the meaning of the translation varies only slightly. Errors of form are mistakes in the target language that can be detected by considering the target text independently from the source. Finally, errors of compliance entail a failure to comply with project-specific style or terminology guidelines, whereby deviations from project instructions, such as a request to apply style guides or glossaries, are considered errors even if the translation would otherwise be correct (54). The TQI assigns a weight to each of these three types of errors and may then be used to calculate a score that summarizes the quality of a given translation in a single value.

Process-Oriented Translation Quality Standards

Process-oriented standards focus on the procedures and practices that are required to produce quality translation, such as defining project specifications, terminology management, translation, editing, formatting, proofreading, quality control, and post project review, making them the most appropriate standards for assessing LSPs (ATA 2008, 30). Examples of process-oriented standards include international standard ISO 9001, EU standard EN 15038:2006, U.S. standard ASTM F2575-06, Canadian standard CAN/CGSB-131.10-2008, Italian standard UNI 10574, German standard DIN 2345, Austrian standards ÖNORM D1200 and D1201, and Chinese standard GB/T 19363.1. However, given that a detailed analysis of every process-oriented translation quality standard available around the world is beyond

the scope of this project, this review of process-oriented standards will focus on ISO 9001, ASTM F2575-06, and EN 15038:2006, seeing that ISO 9001 is the standard currently applied by U.S. LSPs, ASTM F2575-06 is the only standard designed specifically for the U.S. language services industry, and EN 15038:2006 provides a useful model for regulating LSPs.

International Standard ISO 9001

The ISO 9000 series of standards were originally drafted by the British Standards Institute and were adopted by the International Organization for Standardization in 1987 (Stejskal 2006, 14). ISO 9001 sets out specific guidelines for quality management systems for any organization that needs to demonstrate the ability to provide a product that meets specific requirements (ISO 2011). In the absence of quality standards designed specifically for the translation and localization industry prior to 2006, ISO 9001 has traditionally been the primary quality standard used to regulate LSPs around the world and many U.S. translation companies are ISO 9001-certified today. However, as Gérard De Angéli points out in his article *Do We Really Need Translation Standards After All?,* ISO 9001 is a generic standard applicable to all manufacturing and service industries and does not address processes specific to the translation industry such as defining the specifications of a translation project, terminology management, editing, and other processes (De Angéli 2008). Moreover, according to Stejskal, applying the ISO 9001 standard to the language services industry can be problematic

because it forces LSPs to apply quality management processes that were designed for manufacturing industries and may not be appropriate for a creative industry such as translation (Stejskal 2006, 14). Nevertheless, many LSPs continue to be compelled to obtain ISO 9001 certification either at the insistence of their clients or in an effort to boost their competitiveness in the marketplace by adding "certified" to their product descriptions (14).

European Standard EN 15038:2006

European standard EN 15038:2006 was published by the Comité Européen de Normalisation (European Committee for Standardization or CEN) in June 2006. The purpose of the standard is to define the European language services industry and to provide LSPs with a set of procedures and requirements for the provision of quality translation services (CEN 2006, 4). The standard defines the basic terms applicable to the European language services industry and addresses human and technical resources, quality and project management, the client-LSP relationship, and service procedures.

The specific requirements of EN 15038:2006 with regard to human and technical resources include that translators have at least translating competence, linguistic competence in the source language and target language, research competence, cultural competence, and technical competence (CEN 2006, 6-7). Revisers are required to have the same competencies in addition to translation experience. As to technical resources, EN 15038:2006 requires that European LSPs have access to the requisite

equipment for the proper execution of translation projects, including equipment required for the safe and confidential handling, storage, retrieval archiving, and disposal of documents and data, the requisite communications equipment, including hardware and software, as well as access to sources of information and media (7).

With regard to quality and project management, EN 15038:2006 requires European LSPs to have a documented quality management system in place that includes at least a statement of quality management objectives, processes for monitoring and correcting quality, as well as processes for handling all information and materials received from the client (CEN 2006, 7). European LSPs are also required to have documented translation project management systems in place that include the preparation process, assigning translators, assigning revisers and reviewers, issuing instructions, monitoring consistency, monitoring deadlines, maintaining contact with all parties involved, and giving final approval for delivery (CEN 2006, 9).

With regard to the Client-LSP relationship, EN 15038:2006 requires European LSPs to show documented procedures for handling inquiries, determining project feasibility, preparing quotations, entering into service agreements, invoicing, and recording payments (CEN 2006, 8). Similarly, EN 15038:2006 also requires European LSPs to show documented service procedures covering the translation process and the revision process. Finally, EN 15038:2006 requires translators to address terminology, grammar, lexis,

style, locale, formatting, and appropriateness for the target group and purpose of the translation, and specifically stipulates that a reviser other than the translator must revise every translation for terminology consistency, register, and style (11).

LSPs may demonstrate compliance with EN 15038:2006 either through third-party certification or self-certification. Third-party certification requires that a certifying body carry out an inspection and issue a certificate while self-certification requires simply that an LSP demonstrate a commitment to adhere to the standard (De Angéli 2008).

U.S. Standard ASTM F2575-06

The ASTM Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation (ASTM F2575-06) was implemented in 2006 as the first formal guideline to regulate the U.S. language services industry. According to Steve Lank, Chair of the subcommittee responsible for developing the standard, "ASTM F2575-06 was designed to be consumer-oriented and represents a concerted effort by representatives from translation agencies and the freelance translation industry, government agencies, professional associations, academia, as well as translation clients" (Lank 1999). The purpose of ASTM F2575-06 is to provide clients with a framework for the procurement of translation services, which it does by providing an introduction to translation, including basic language services industry terms and concepts, and by providing

recommendations on selecting an LSP as well as a description of the different phases of a translation project.

The definitions section of ASTM F2575-06 provides an in-depth explanation of the basic terminology used in the U.S. language services industry along with a discussion of each term. The guideline also provides an introduction to translation aimed at individuals with little or no experience in the language services industry, as seen in the quote below:

> The process of translation begins with a text (called the source text) and results in the creation of a text (called the target text) in another language. The aim of the process is to produce a target text (called the translation) that corresponds to the source text, according to the criteria agreed upon in advance. (ASTM International 2006, 5)

It is also worth noting that the introduction to translation section defines quality as "the degree to which the characteristics of a translation fulfill the requirements of agreed-upon specifications", whereby ASTM F2575-06 allows the stakeholders to define quality based on the requirements of a given project rather than a required set of procedures, error counts, or other criteria (2006, 5).

ASTM F2575-06 provides recommendations for selecting an LSP that include guidelines for clients to evaluate their own needs as well as a set of relevant LSP competencies to be considered. For example, when deciding whether to hire an individual or a company for a specific project, ASTM

F2575-06 recommends that clients consider whether translation needs are ongoing or sporadic, the LSP's ability to handle the type and size of project in question, the resources that the project requires, whether the client wishes to retain responsibility for project management, as well as any special technical or security requirements (ASTM International 2006, 4). With regard to LSP competencies, ASTM F2575-06 recommends that clients take into account source language and target language competence, translation competence, subject field competence, text-type competence, and translation technology competence when selecting a provider, though it does not require LSPs to have any of those competencies (6-7).

ASTM F2575-06 also includes a description of typical project phases, including the specifications phase, the production phase, and the post-project review phase. The specifications phase is designed to assist the client and the LSP determine the most appropriate, reliable, and efficient solution for a translation project and to establish reasonable expectations for both. Project specifications include the intended use of the translation, source text parameters, such as the locale, subject, and format, target text parameters, such as the locale of the target audience, the purpose of the translation, and the medium of delivery, as well as procedural parameters, such as project deadlines and the use of reference materials, translation memories, glossaries, or style guides (ASTM International 2006, 7-10). The production phase addresses the steps required to carry out the translation project

according to project specifications and may include a specifications agreement, terminology management, translation, editing, formatting, proofreading, and quality control (10). Finally, the post-project review stage compares the project's results to the original specifications (11).

The table below provides a summary of the primary translation quality standards currently regulating the U.S. language services industry.

Table 1. Primary Translation Quality Standards

Type		Name	Locale	Authority/ Author	Cert. offered?	Comments
Provider-oriented standards	Prof.	ATA Certification	U.S.	ATA	Yes	Certification based on standardized exam
		CTTIC Certification	Canada	CTTIC	Yes	Certification based on standardized exam
		Chartered Inst. of Linguists	U.K.	IoL	Yes	Certification based on standardized exam
	Gov.	Defense Language Proficiency Test	U.S.	DoD	Yes	Assesses language competency of civilian and military linguists
		United States Foreign Service Language Test	U.S.	DoS	Yes	Assesses language competency of foreign service applicants
	Acad.	Professional Certificate	U.S.	ASU	Yes	Non-degree professional program
		Graduate Certificate	U.S.	DU	Yes	Graduate-level certificate based on 24 semester hours
		M.A. in Translation	U.S.	MIIS	Yes	Two-year full time post graduate degree
		Ph.D. in Translation	U.S.	KSU	Yes	Doctor of Translation Studies requiring 60 semester hours
Process-oriented standards		ISO 9001	Int.	ISO	Yes	Regulates generic quality management systems
		EN 15038:2006	E.U.	European Stand. Committee	Yes	Provides specific requirements for LSPs
		ASTM F2575-06	U.S.	ASTM	No	Collaborative guideline for defining project specifications
		CAN/CGSB-131.10-2008	Canada	Canadian Gen. Stand. Board	Yes	Based on a modified version of EN 15038:2006
		UNI 10574	Italy	UNI (Italian Stand. Org.)	No	Defines the services and activities of LSPs
		DIN 2345	Germany	DIN (German Stand. Institute)	No	Focuses on translation contracts
		ÖNORM D1200/ D1201	Austria	ÖNORM (Austrian Stand. Institute)	Yes	Sets requirements for translation contracts and services
		GB/T 19363.1	China	PRC Stand. Administration	No	Provides specifications for translation service
Product-oriented standards		SAE Standard	Int.	SAE	No	Metric for assessing translation of automotive service materials
		Translation Quality Index	Int.	Riccardo Schiaffino and Franco Zearo	No	Quantitative method for measuring errors in translation
		LISA QA Model	Int.	LISA	No	LISA was dissolved in 2011

Discussion

Analysis of Translation Quality Standards

A review of the translation quality standards that regulate the U.S. language services industry has raised important questions with regard to the adequacy of that regulatory framework. The following discussion addresses the adequacy of current provider-oriented, product-oriented, and process-oriented translation quality standards with the aim of demonstrating the need for a new procedure to certify LSPs.

Provider-oriented translation quality standards administered by professional organizations, government bodies, and academic institutions are an excellent resource for certifying individual translators but have no application beyond testing individual linguists. For example, ATA certification is an especially useful tool for ensuring translator competency given the prestige and recognition that the ATA enjoys in the U.S. language services industry, yet there is no such mechanism for ensuring the competency of translation companies. Therefore, given that they only address individual translators, provider-oriented translation quality standards alone are inadequate for regulating U.S. LSPs.

Product-oriented standards such as SAE J2450, the LISA QA Model, and Schiaffino and Zearo's TQI can be very useful for determining the presence of errors in translation products under specific circumstances. However, the quantitative error assessment methodology of product-

oriented standards makes them inappropriate for general assessments of LSPs for a number of reasons. First, the fact that this methodology assumes that quality is equivalent to the absence of errors can be problematic in many situations. For example, a quantitative error assessment methodology might determine that an unsophisticated translation of a simple text is of higher quality than the most artful rendition of a complex literary work based solely on the absence of errors in the former and the presence of errors in the latter. Second, error assessments can never be applied under truly objective criteria because the evaluators who are tasked with counting and scoring the severity of errors will inevitably apply some degree of subjectivity when determining what constitutes an error or how to measure the severity of a given error. Finally, the results obtained from this methodology may be unreliable if the sample size considered is too small. For example, a sample from a scientific study may over-represent quality if taken from a section on general considerations, where errors are less likely, or it may under-represent quality if taken from a section on technical specifications, where errors are more likely. Therefore, while product-oriented translation quality standards may be useful for determining the presence of errors in translation products under specific circumstances, such as grading standardized translation tests or when controlled language is used, their quantitative error assessment methodology makes them inappropriate for regulating LSPs.

Process-oriented standards such as ISO 9001, EN 15038:2006, and ASTM F2575-06 provide useful guidelines and best practices for translation projects but there is currently no process-oriented standard designed specifically for certifying U.S. LSPs. The ISO 9001 standard is a practical guideline for generic quality management systems but Stejskal and De Angéli have raised serious doubts as to its suitability for regulating LSPs because it does not address translation-specific processes (Stejskal 2006; De Angéli 2008).

EN 15038:2006 and ASTM F2575-06 are the process-oriented translation quality standards with the greatest potential to regulate U.S. LSPs but neither of them was designed specifically for that purpose. The primary difference between EN 15038:2006 and ASTM F2575-06 is that the former is a quality standard that sets specific requirements for European LSPs while the latter is a quality guideline that provides recommended best practices for procuring quality translation services. The provider focus of EN 15038:2006 is seen in the fact that it is comprised of a series of prerequisites that European LSPs must meet with regard to human resources, technical resources, procedures, etc. In contrast, the buyer focus of ASTM F2575-06 is seen in the fact that it provides recommendations on how clients may establish specifications for translation projects as well as the relevant competencies that they should consider when selecting an LSP. For example, the terms and definitions section of EN 15038:2006 contains

only 248 words (approximately equivalent to 1.25 pages of this paper) aimed at creating consistency across the LSPs of different EU countries, while the definitions section of ASTM F2575-06 contains 2,668 words (approximately equivalent to 13.25 pages of this paper) aimed at introducing terms and concepts to individuals with little or no experience in the language services industry (CEN 2006; ASTM International 2006).

Therefore, EN 15038:2006 provides a quality standard for European LSPs while ASTM F2575-06 provides a guideline for client education and recommended best practices. However, EN 15038:2006 has not been adopted by any standards organization that regulates the U.S. language services industry and so it is unsuitable for assessing U.S. LSPs. On the other hand, ASTM F2575-06 is applicable to the U.S. language services industry but it only serves as a guideline for building cooperation between stakeholders and does not require compliance with any specific requirements, whereby it is also unsuitable for assessing U.S. LSPs.

Table 2. Comparison of ASTM F2575-06 and EN 15038:2006.

EN 15038:2006	**ASTM F2575-06**
Provider focused	Buyer focused
A standard which defines specific requirements that LSPs must apply	A guideline that offers best practices which clients and LSPs may apply
Provides specific metrics	Does not provide specific metrics
Requires translations to be revised (edited) by a "second set of eyes"	Makes no specific requirements as to processes, procedures, or methods
Includes informative appendixes outlining specific LSP practices	Includes no appendixes outlining specific LSP practices
Briefly defines terminology for consistency across LSPs of EU countries	In-depth explanation and discussion of basic terminology for clients' benefit
Allows LSPs to become certified through a third-party audit or self-certification	No option for certification

In conclusion, while provider-oriented translation quality standards offer various mechanisms for certifying individual translators, product-oriented standards can be useful for assessing the quality of translation products under very specific circumstances, and current process-oriented standards provide a useful European model and recommended best practices for the U.S. language service industry, there is currently no procedure designed specifically to regulate U.S. LSPs. Therefore, it is clear that the U.S. language services industry requires a new procedure to certify LSPs.

Summary and Analysis of Interview

The research carried out for this project included an interview with Steve Lank, Director of Operations of Syntes Language Group and Chairman of the subcommittee responsible for developing ASTM F2575-06. The purpose of this interview was to gain an insider's perspective on what went into the design, development, and implementation of the first U.S. translation quality guideline in order to determine the most suitable methodology for the LSP Certification Procedure proposed in this project.

The interview was conducted via Skype on October 25, 2011, and recorded with permission using the program Call Recorder™. IRB approval was obtained for the interview. The interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes and provided valuable insight into how ASTM F2575-06 was developed and implemented. A transcript of the interview is attached as

Appendix 2 and a summary and analysis of the information obtained from the interview is provided below.

Summary

Mr. Lank indicated that the purpose of ASTM F2575-06 is to provide clients with the tools that they need to obtain the desired quality without having to evaluate the language work themselves. Since it is usually the case that clients do not speak both the source and target languages, ASTM F2575-06 focuses on upfront specifications in order to give clients the confidence that they need to place their trust in their provider and tells them what to expect and what they need to discuss with their LSP in order to obtain the desired result.

In describing the process of developing and implementing the standard, Mr. Lank mentioned that some of the challenges included the methodology of the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM), the time involved in the process, as well as opposition from certain groups. As to the ASTM methodology, Mr. Lank explained that ASTM standards are voluntary consensus standards, whereby all ASTM members vote on whether to approve a standard, including many people who are outside of the industry and may have never used translation services before. With regard to the time involved in the process, Mr. Lank mentioned that the effort to develop an ASTM translation quality standard begin in 1998 and the final ASTM F2575-06 guideline was only approved in 2006, whereby the scope had to be

limited as much as possible in order to streamline the process. Finally, Mr. Lank mentioned that freelance translators were initially opposed to specific requirements on qualifications and resources because they felt that such requirements would favor translation agencies and exclude them from translation work, and larger providers were not enthusiastic about opening their books and sharing their processes with potential competitors. Therefore, the decision was made to create a guideline of recommended best practices as opposed to a standard with specific requirements because it was the model most likely to be accepted by all parties.

In discussing the role of quality standards as a label of quality, Mr. Lank mentioned that the subcommittee opted not to provide specific quality requirements but rather to allow clients and providers to define quality based on project specifications in order to avoid forcing them into processes or products that clients may not want or even need. As Mr. Lank put it, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and so is quality" (Lank 2011). Therefore, in its current form, LSPs may familiarize themselves with ASTM F2575-06 and advertise their compliance with it, but Mr. Lank was quick to point out the limitations of self-certification, mentioning that clients want to see proof of compliance. Mr. Lank also mentioned that he feels that the industry would benefit from a procedure to certify LSPs, but since the ASTM does not carry out compliance audits and the ISO only carries out compliance audits of its own standards, an independent third party would

need to be identified to audit compliance with ASTM F2575-06. In addition, he mentioned that while the ATA supported the process of developing ASTM F2575-06, it would not be a suitable body to certify LSPs because its existing language industry connections could harm the credibility of any eventual certification.

Analysis

The interview with Mr. Lank provided a number of insights into how a translation quality standard is designed and implemented, which proved to be very useful in determining the methodology for the LSP Certification Procedure proposed in this project. First, the fact that ASTM F2575-06 was a collaborative effort between so many stakeholders turned out to be its greatest strength as well as its greatest limitation. On one hand, that approach ensured that ASTM F2575-06 would be widely accepted by all stakeholders, yet on the other hand, it also limited its potential to regulate LSPs. As such, Mr. Lank's experience suggests that developing an industry quality standard requires striking a balance between a standard that is too demanding, which is not likely to gain wide acceptance, and a standard that is not demanding enough, which may be widely accepted but would be of limited value in regulating quality. Therefore, the limitations of ASTM F2575-06 demonstrate that the LSP Certification Procedure proposed in this project must be demanding enough to establish a meaningful quality standard yet general enough to avoid excluding large numbers of providers.

Second, the choice to develop the guideline under the auspices of the ASTM required much of its efforts to go to educating people outside of the industry on basic industry processes and concepts. Moreover, since the ASTM does not audit compliance with its standards, any certification against ASTM F2575-06 would require the involvement of a third party. Therefore, while developing the first U.S. translation quality guideline under the auspices of the ASTM may have been appropriate to ensure the broadest level of acceptance, the LSP Certification Procedure proposed in this project must be adopted by an industry body or independent third party with the capacity to audit compliance in order to create a meaningful label of quality.

Design of the LSP Certification Procedure

The LSP Certification Procedure included in Appendix 1 has been designed to synthesize the mechanisms set out in existing translation quality standards into a practical set of minimum requirements for U.S. LSPs. European standard EN 15038:2006 provides an excellent reference for the procedure, though many sections of the European standard, such as the terms and definitions, professional competencies for translators, and translation and editing procedures are either too specific to European LSPs or too demanding to be applied to the U.S. language services industry. The ASTM F2575-06 guideline also provides a useful reference for the proposed LSP Certification Procedure and the provisions for selecting an LSP and the description of project phases are especially relevant. In addition, Mr. Lank's

experience in developing and implementing ASTM F2575-06 provides an invaluable reference for designing this LSP Certification Procedure.

While the design of the proposed LSP Certification Procedure is based on existing translation quality standards, it makes a new contribution to the field by adapting preexisting standards, guidelines, and best practices into a set of specific minimum requirements that LSPs are required to meet. The lessons learned from ASTM F2575-06 suggest that the procedure must outline a set of minimum requirements that are demanding enough to establish a meaningful quality standard yet generic enough to be applicable to the 40,000 individual U.S. LSPs.

Finally, given that the purpose of the proposed LSP Certification Procedure is to provide a label of quality, it is designed to be adopted by a body with suitable qualifications for carrying out third-party compliance audits such as the ATA or an independent standards organization. However, in light of the fact that it is beyond the scope of this project to identify such a body, an important consideration in the design of the procedure was the inclusion of a provision for client audits of LSP compliance as an interim mechanism to ensure that LSPs have met the minimum requirements.

Areas for Further Research

While this paper has suggested that the ATA may be an appropriate body to carry out third-party audits of compliance with the proposed LSP Certification Procedure, Mr. Lank has expressed concern that an ATA-

sponsored certification would be seen as self-serving and could even cause the LSP Certification Procedure to lose credibility. On the contrary, he suggested that an independent body would be more appropriate, though he indicated that the ISO could not fill that role since it only certifies against its own standards and he was not able to suggest an independent body that might certify LSPs. Therefore, given that it is beyond the scope of this project to carry out a review of independent certification bodies, further research needs to be carried out to identify a suitable body to carry out third-party audits of compliance with the LSP Certification Procedure proposed in this project.

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Appendix 1: LSP Certification Procedure

Objective

The objective of this LSP Certification Procedure is to provide a symbol of quality that indicates that LSPs have met a set of minimum requirements. Such a symbol of quality will simplify the process of identifying qualified LSPs for clients and will add value to the services provided by certified LSPs. In this manner, potential clients will be better equipped to identify and engage the most appropriate provider while LSPs will be held to a minimum standard despite the industry's low barriers to entry.

Application

LSPs may compare their existing polices and procedures against the minimum requirements contained in this procedure. Once their policies and procedures have been brought into compliance, they may apply the Self-Certification Checklist contained in Appendix 1.7. Upon successful completion of the checklist, the LSP will be entitled to advertise itself as a Self-Certified LSP on its marketing materials, websites, etc. and will be required to make the LSP Self-Certification Checklist and Client LSP Audit Checklist available whenever certified status is advertised.

Eligibility

Any LSP that meets the specific requirements set out in this procedure is eligible to take the LSP Self-Certification Checklist. There are no specific

prerequisites with regard to size or geographic location beyond the specific requirements set out in the procedure.

Required Resources

Human Resources

LSPs must have sufficient human resources available to provide at least translation, editing, and project management functions. Human resources may be in-house or subcontracted, but in the case of freelance professionals the LSP retains all responsibility for verifying competencies and qualifications. While each function requires specific skills, a single professional may perform various functions if it is appropriate for the requirements of a project. For example, in the case of a large translation project, a dedicated project manager may delegate functions to various translators and proofreaders, while in the case of small translation projects, a single professional may simultaneously serve as project manager and proofreader in order to control the cost of the service. While the assignment of functions may be made according to the specific criteria for each project, it is an indispensible requirement that the LSPs disclose whether the translation function and the editing function will be carried out by the same person or by separate professionals.

Requirements for Translators

Translators must demonstrate language competency, translation competency, and subject matter competency.

Language competency refers to a high level of reading comprehension abilities in the source language and a high level of text production abilities in the target language. Language competency may be verified through ATA certification, passing scores on government-administered language examinations such as the United States Defense Foreign Language Proficiency Test or the United States Foreign Service Language Test, an academic certificate, undergraduate degree, or postgraduate degree in language or translation, or several years of verifiable experience working with the language combination or residing where either the source or target language is spoken.

Translation competency refers to knowledge of the basic translation tools, processes, techniques, and technologies used in translation projects. Translation competency may be verified through an academic certificate, undergraduate degree, or postgraduate degree in translation, passing scores on translation tests, several years of verifiable experience translating between the source or target language, sample translations, or translation-related references.

Subject matter competency refers to the level of professional experience or education in a specific field required to accurately translate and present industry-specific texts in the target language with the appropriate language, terminology, and formatting for a particular context. Examples of industry-specific texts include engineering specifications,

scientific studies, medical records, corporate financial reports, patents, or binding legal documents. Subject matter competency may be demonstrated with several years of verifiable experience working in the field, passing scores on subject-specific translation tests, or professional references.

Requirements for Editors

Given that the primary role of editors is to review the work of translators, editors must meet the minimum requirements set out above for translators and must have verifiable experience working as translators in the language pair. In addition, editors must be able to compare source and target texts for accuracy and completeness and must be able to quickly and efficiently conduct research where specialized language is required.

Requirements for Project Managers

Project managers coordinate all phases of the translation project in order to supervise its proper execution, including pre-production procedures, production procedures, and post-production procedures. As such, project managers must be capable of assigning translators and proofreaders that match the project's requirements, overseeing multiple tasks in order to ensure that project deadlines and specifications are met, and must be able to maintain contact with all parties involved in the project during every stage of the translation process.

Technical Resources

LSPs must have access to a basic set of technical resources required to execute translation projects. A basic set of technical resources should include at least the hardware necessary for the handling, archiving, backup, and retrieval of documents in a confidential manner, all software required to execute the translation project, including a basic suite of productivity tools sufficient to process standard file formats, as well as the communication equipment required to maintain contact with all parties involved at every stage of the translation project.

Required Procedures

Pre-Production Procedures

Defining Project Specifications

LSPs are required to have a procedure in place for defining a basic set of specifications with regard to the requirements and feasibility of a translation project with the client prior to quoting or accepting language work. A basic set of specifications should include at least the following: the language and locale of the source text and the intended language and locale of the target text, the intended target audience and purpose of the translation, such as whether the translation of a product manual is intended for end users or technicians, or whether the translation of a contract is to be merely informative or legally binding, the format in which the source text is to be provided and the translation is to be delivered (.doc, .pdf, .html, hardcopy, etc.), the approximate volume of work, any project-specific

references, such as past-translations or additional information on the product, case, or matter that is the subject of the translation, whether there are any project-specific resources, such as translation memories, glossaries, or style guides, whether there are any project-specific instructions, such as the use of controlled language, preferred terminology, or formatting instructions such as the need to recreate tables, graphics, and so forth, what the quality expectations are, such as whether the translation requires editing by a separate translator, how much time is available for the translation project, and whether rush service is required. The basic set of specifications may be communicated to the client by the LSP either verbally or through a separate document, but in every case the project specifications must be decided before it may be quoted or work may begin. A sample Pre-Production Project Specifications Questionnaire is included in Appendix 1.1.

LSPs are required to have a procedure in place for communicating the basic terms of a given translation project to the client in writing before work is begun. The project quotation must clearly specify at least the specific services that will be included in the project, the rates and billing units used to calculate the price of the service (words, pages, hours, etc.), whether prices and volumes of work are fixed or estimated, whether there will be surcharges due to rush fees, whether there will be discounts for volume, applicable taxes, deadlines, delivery instructions, as well as any other

relevant project specifications. A sample Project Quotation and Service Agreement is included in Appendix 1.2.

Service Agreement

LSPs are required to have a procedure in place for documenting the client's acceptance of the terms and conditions of a translation project. The service agreement must specify at least a unique project identifier, the terms of payment, procedures for settling disputes related with quality or missed deadlines, as well as any other relevant terms and conditions indicated in the project quotation. The service agreement may take the form of a formal contract or a simple statement of terms and conditions appearing on the LSP's project quotation or website. In every case, the client's acceptance of the service agreement or terms and conditions must be documented. A sample Project Quotation and Service Agreement is included in Appendix 1.2.

Production Procedures

Project Management Procedure

LSPs are required to have at least a basic project management procedure in place to ensure that every translation project is executed according to the agreed upon specifications and terms and conditions. At minimum, the project management procedure must indicate the LSP's policies for managing the pre-production phase, such as ensuring acceptance of the project quotation and/or service agreement and screening and hiring

translators and proofreaders, managing the production phase, such as ensuring that the source files are ready for translation and that all files, resources, instructions, and deadlines have been provided to translators and proofreaders, ensuring that contact is maintained with all parties involved during the translation process, including the client, ensuring compliance with instructions and deadlines, checking that the project specifications and terms and conditions have been met in full, delivering the final product to the client, and managing the post-production phase, including addressing any client concerns and obtaining the client's final acceptance of the project. A sample Project Management Checklist is included in Appendix 1.3.

Translation Procedure

LSPs are required to have at least a basic translation procedure in place to ensure that translations are carried out according to a project's agreed upon specifications. At minimum, the translation procedure must indicate a basic set of instructions and expectations for translators that address the integrity of the translation, its suitability for the target language and locale, the consistent use of accurate and appropriate terminology for the subject field, spelling and grammar, proper formatting, and adherence to all project instructions and client preferences. A sample Translation Procedure is included in Appendix 1.4.

Editing Procedure

LSPs are required to have at least a basic editing procedure in place to ensure that translations are edited according to agreed upon specifications. At minimum, the editing procedure must indicate basic instructions and expectations for editors, including checking the integrity of the translation, the accuracy and consistency of terminology, grammar, formatting, as well as any final concerns in preparing the translation for delivery to the client. A sample Editing Checklist is included in Appendix 1.5.

Post-Production Procedures

Client Sign-off Procedure

LSPs are required to have a procedure in place to record the client's final acceptance of the project and acknowledgment that the specifications and terms and conditions indicated in the project quotation or service agreement have been met. The client's final acceptance of the project may be made verbally, in a written statement, or through a Client Sign-off Checklist that provides the client with the opportunity to provide feedback, as long as the client acknowledges that the project has been completed in accordance with the original project specifications and that no further action is required from the LSP. A sample Client Sign-off Checklist is included in Appendix 1.6.

Certification

LSP Self-Certification

Any LSP with policies and procedures in place that meet or exceed the minimum requirements set out in this procedure shall be eligible to take the LSP Self-Certification Checklist. Once the LSP has completed the checklist it may advertise itself as a Self-Certified LSP under the indispensible condition that the LSP Self-Certification Checklist and the Client Audit Checklist are made available wherever its certification is advertised.

Audited Certification

Audited certification of LSP compliance is beyond the scope of this project. However, this LSP Certification Procedure has been designed to be adopted by an industry organization or independent third party. Once a body with the suitable credentials for providing compliance audits has been identified, that body shall determine the specific procedures and requirements for audited certification.

Appendix 1.1: Sample Project Specifications Questionnaire

Client: _____ ***Date:*** _____

Pre-Production Project Specifications Questionnaire

1. What is the source language and locale of the text (for example, Canadian French, European French, etc.)?

2. What is (are) the intended target language(s) and locale(s) for the translation(s) (for example, U.S. Spanish, U.S. English, etc.)?

3. What will be the intended target audience and purpose of this translation (for example, will the translation be for laypersons or trained technicians, informative or legally binding, etc.)?

4. How will the source text be provided and how will the target text be delivered (for example, Microsoft Word™ format, .pdf, .html, hardcopy, etc.)?

5. Have all files for translation been provided? What is the approximate volume of work for this project?

6. Are there any project-specific references available (past-translations or further information on the product/case/matter at hand)?

7. Are there any project-specific resources available (translation memories, glossaries, style guides)?

8. Are there any specific instructions for this project (controlled language, preferred terminology, formatting, text in graphics etc.)?

   Note: In the absence of specific instructions, the accepted conventions of the target language and local will be used for date and time formats, units of measure, etc. and the translation will be formatted as close to the original as possible.

9. Does this translation require editing by a separate editor (publication quality)?

10. How much time is available for the translation project? Is rush service required?

Appendix 1.2: Sample Project Quotation & Service Agreement

Client: _____ Quotation #: _____ Date: _____ Valid until: _____

Project Quotation & Service Agreement

Part I. Project quotation

Item	Price/unit	Units	Volume discount	Surcharge for rush service	Subtotal
Translation (U.S. English into Mexican Spanish)	$.00/word	xxxx	$00.00	$00.00	$00.00
Translation (U.S. English into Brazilian Portuguese)	$.00/word	xxxx	$00.00	$00.00	$00.00
Final target language editing	$00/hour	xxx	$00.00	$00.00	$00.00
Tax					$00.00
Total					**$00.00**
__% advance due prior to project commencement					$00.00
Approximate balance due upon project completion					$00.00

Part II. Terms and conditions

- The project entails translation of a product manual intended for end users.
- Source files are in .pdf format and the translation is to be delivered in .doc format.
- The indicated numbers of units are estimates and may be adjusted +/- 10%.
- The translations will include all text from the .pdf files but graphics will not be recreated.
- The client retains all responsibility for Desk Top Publishing (DTP).
- The rate for translation includes editing by a separate editor.
- The client has not provided translation memories, glossaries, or style guides.
- The client has indicated a website for additional information about the product.
- Final target language proofreading will be provided as an additional service after DTP.
- The LSP will retain ownership over the translation memories created during the process but will provide the client with a glossary of terminology used.
- The edited translations are due ten business days after acceptance of this Quotation & Service Agreement. Final target language editing is due five business days after completion of DTP.
- Missed deadlines will result in a 2% project discount per calendar day.
- Any changes to these terms by the Client may result in additional fees.

Part III. Acceptance

The Client indicates acceptance of this quote by making the advance payment and signing below.

I hereby accept the terms indicated on this Quote and Service Agreement:

_____ _____ _____

(signature) (printed name) (date)

Appendix 1.3: Sample Project Management Checklist

Client: _____ ***Project #:*** _____ ***Date:*** _____

Project Management Checklist

1. Managing the pre-production processes
   - ✓ Has the client accepted the project quotation and/or service agreement?
   - ✓ Have translators and editors (if applicable) been screened?
   - ✓ Have translators and editors confirmed availability for the project?
   - ✓ Have rates been confirmed and purchase orders been issued?
2. Managing the translation process:
   - ✓ Have all translation tasks been assigned appropriately?
   - ✓ Have translators been provided with the source files and all available resources and instructions?
   - ✓ Have translators' uncertainties been answered or referred to the client?
   - ✓ Have the translations been completed according to instructions?
3. Managing the editing process (if applicable):
   - ✓ Have the editors been provided with the source files, the translations, and all available resources and instructions?
   - ✓ Have all editors' questions been referred to the appropriate translator?
   - ✓ Have the editors certified that the translations are complete and accurate?
4. Preparing project for handoff to client:
   - ✓ Have all parts of the translation been translated/edited/formatted?
   - ✓ Has the project timetable been kept?
   - ✓ Have all project specifications been met?
5. Managing post-production processes:
   - ✓ Have the client's concerns, if any, been addressed?
   - ✓ Has the client confirmed final acceptance of the project?

Appendix 1.4: Sample Translation Procedure

Client: _____ ***Project #:*** _____ ***Date:*** _____

Translation Procedure

1. Translate all source text, being careful not to omit or add any words, lines, or text. The translation must reflect the tone, register, and structure of the source text in a manner appropriate for the indicated target audience or style guide. Avoid regionalisms or language not suitable for the target audience.

2. Use terminology appropriate for the subject field and conduct research when necessary to confirm its use, meaning, or appropriateness. Ensure that terminology is used consistently throughout the translation and according to project glossaries or instructions. If you have uncertainties with regard to terminology, please express your concerns to your project manager.

3. Respect spelling and grammar rules for the target language and locale. Be sure to adhere to accepted conventions for punctuation, time and date formats, regional spelling etc.

4. Work into the indicated file format (.doc, .xls, html, etc.). Format the translation as closely as possible to the source text or according the project instructions, including font size and style, line spacing, tables, bullets, headers and footers, text boxes, and other formatting as appropriate.

5. Ensure that the translation is complete and accurate and that all project instructions have been followed before delivery, including checking your own work for completeness and accuracy and running a spell check.

Appendix 1.5: Sample Editing Checklist

Client: _____ ***Project #:*** _____ ***Date:*** _____

Editing Checklist

1. Integrity of the translation
   - ✓ Has all source text been translated? Are there any missing words or lines?
   - ✓ Are the tone, register, and structure appropriate for the target audience?
   - ✓ Does the translation contain distortions, additions, regionalisms, mistranslations, or inappropriate language?
2. Accuracy and consistency of terminology
   - ✓ Has accurate and appropriate terminology been used?
   - ✓ Is terminology used consistently throughout the translation?
   - ✓ Have project glossaries or client preferences (if applicable) been followed?
3. Grammar
   - ✓ Does the translation follow the conventions of the target language and locale for punctuation, time and date formats, regional spelling etc.?
   - ✓ Is the translation free from improper grammar, spelling errors, and typos?
4. Formatting
   - ✓ Has the translation been delivered in the proper file format?
   - ✓ Does formatting match the source or the project's instructions, including font, spacing, and appropriate use of tables, bullets, headers and footers?
5. Final concerns
   - ✓ Has the translation been done according to all project instructions (style guides, glossaries, client preferences)?
   - ✓ Have any doubts or uncertainties been referred back to the translator?
   - ✓ Is the translation ready for handoff to the client?
   - ✓ Has the project timetable been kept?

Appendix 1.6: Sample Client Sign-off Checklist

Client: _____ ***Project #:*** _____ ***Date:*** _____

Client Sign-off Checklist

Part I. Checklist

- ✓ Was the translation delivered in the indicated format?
- ✓ Have all contracted services been provided in full?
- ✓ Have all special instructions for the project been followed?
- ✓ Does the translation meet project specifications?
- ✓ Have all inquiries been fully addressed?
- ✓ Are any additional services required?

Part II. Sign-off

I hereby acknowledge that the aforementioned project has been completed in full according to agreed specifications and that no further action is required by the LSP.

_____	_____	_____
(signature)	(printed name)	(date)

Appendix 1.7: LSP Self-Certification Checklist

LSP Self-Certification Checklist

LSPs may obtain the status of Self-Certified LSP by completing and signing this checklist and making it available along with the Client LSP Audit Checklist whenever certified status is advertised.

Part I. Checklist

1. Specify minimum requirements for translators (education, certification, tools etc.):
   _____
2. Specify minimum requirements for editors (education, certification, tools etc.):
   _____
3. Specify minimum requirements for project managers:
   _____
4. Specify basic hardware resources available for translation projects:
   _____
5. Specify basic software resources available for translation projects:
   _____
6. Specify other relevant technical resources available for translation projects:
   _____
7. Describe how project specifications are defined with the client:
   _____
   _____
8. Describe the procedure for quoting translation projects:
   _____
   _____
9. Describe how the client's acceptance of project terms and conditions is documented:
   _____
   _____
10. Describe the project management procedure:
    _____
    _____
11. Describe the translation procedure:
    _____
    _____
12. Describe the editing procedure:
    _____
    _____
13. Describe how the client's final acceptance of the project is documented:
    _____
    _____

Part II. Sign-off

I hereby acknowledge that all statements made on this LSP Self-Certification Checklist are true and accurate and I agree to make this LSP Self-Certification Checklist as well as the Client LSP Audit Checklist available on paper or electronically whenever I advertise my status as a *Self-Certified LSP*.

_____	_____	_____
(signature)	(printed name)	(date)

Appendix 1.8: Client LSP Audit Checklist

Client LSP Audit Checklist

1. Human Resources

   What qualifications do(es) the translator(s) have that will be working on my project?
   What qualifications do(es) the editor(s) have that will be working on my project?
   What percentage of your translators or editors are ATA-certified or hold a degree in translation?

2. Technical resources

   How is confidentiality guaranteed in the case of subcontracted translators or proofreaders?
   Is there a disaster recover plan in place to protect my data?
   How often is my data backed up?
   What Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) tools are available for my translation project?
   What file formats can you handle?

3. Defining project specifications

   Will a translation be provided that is suitable for the subject, audience, and locale?
   Will the translation be delivered back to me in my specified file format?
   Will my style guides, glossaries, and terminology preferences be implemented?
   Will my translation project by completed within the specified deadline?

4. Project Quotation

   What services are included in the translation fee?
   What services are not included in the translation fee?
   What optional services are available?
   Will a rush fee be required to make my deadline?
   Will there be a volume discount?
   What are the terms of payment?

5. Service Agreement

   What will happen if I change instructions once the project has begun?
   What will happen if project deadlines are missed?
   What will happen if project specifications are not met?
   What will happen if I find the quality of the translation to be unacceptable?

6. Project management procedure

   Will there by a project manager assigned to oversee my project?
   Will I have contact with the project manager throughout the translation process?
   Will I have the opportunity to provide preliminary feedback on a sample of the translation?
   What percentage of the total project will that sample represent?

7. Translation procedure

   What specific instructions will the translator receive?
   Will the translation be appropriate for my target audience and locale?
   Will my preferred terminology be used consistently?
   Will the translation be formatted to look like the source document?
   What happens if the translator does not understand a term?

8. Editing procedure

   Will an editor other than the translator edit my project?
   What instructions will the proofreader receive?

9. Client sign-off procedure

   Will I have the opportunity to review the project at length before final acceptance?
   Will I have the opportunity to provide feedback on the translation process?

Appendix 2: Transcript of 10-25-2011 Interview with Steve Lank

The following is a transcript of the interview conducted with Steve Lank, Director of Operations of Syntes Language Group and Chairman of the subcommittee responsible for developing ASTM F2575-06. The interview was recorded with permission and IRB approval was obtained. The text in bold represents the interviewer and the text in italics represents the interviewee.

[0:00] [recording starts after permission is given to record the interview]

My first question for you is, in general terms, uh... in general terms, what you feel the purpose of the ASTM standard is.

Well, the purpose of the ASTM standard is really… it's really a sort of set of parameters for the buyers of translation. It's really aimed at the people who buy translation rather than the people who uh… actually provide the serve.

There are other standards out there such as EN 15038, which is the European standard, which really focuses more on uh… provider qualifications, among other things.

And so, uh… the ASTM standard is really aimed at buyers… and uh… it's meant to give buyers the tools that they need to uh… sort of…

[1:00]

generally sort of… uh… give them the… the feeling… or the ability to uh… to procure a service uh… and get the quality they need without really being able to evaluate the language work themselves, because that's one of the problems that we have in the translation and localization industry is that people are procuring the service, but you know… unless the buyer is a speaker of the language themselves, and even then… if they are not a translator they might not know… they really have to… to uh… put their trust in their providers, so the purpose of the ASTM standard is to uh… you know… to take a little of that uncertainty away and to let buyers know what they should expect and what they need to discuss with their provider in order to uh… you know… uh… in the end… to get the result that they want. So, the ASTM standard really focuses on upfront specifications, uh…

[2:00]

…since quality really is so difficult to define, basically what you need to do is that the provider and the LSP need to… they need to talk up front to discuss upfront what exactly the uh… the client needs, and uh…

[phone rings in background]

you know… and to deliver on that, so essentially, if… you know… if the client and the provider sit down and say this is what I need, this is how I need it, and the provider delivers on that, then the client has gotten the quality that it wants. So the ASTM standard is really there to help clients… customers… who are procuring translation, to get the quality language services that they need.

I see. That's one of the things that I noticed reading it, is that uh… there is quite a bit of time spent defining industry terms so uh… I can really get a sense of that buyer focus that you mentioned.

Exactly…. And all ASTM standards are focused that way… they're very buyer-focused.

[3:00]

Oh, okay. The one that… the one that we're referring to now is the only one that I've ever read so I don't have anything to compare it to…

Yeah… you know… ASTM standards are primarily known for manufacturing, but they do handle services as well. In fact, there is also an ASTM standard out there for interpretation and there is… uh… there's uh… there is another one for training and uh… for teaching… languages.

Oh, okay.

Those are all relatively new and this year, for the first time… I mean we were all separate before, we were all under the umbrella of Consumer Products in ASTM, which means that… well… these are all voluntary consensus standards, which means that the whole membership of ASTM can vote

[4:00]

on whether… uh… you know… whether a standard should go forward or not, and uh… when we were going through the process of getting our standard

approved by the body, we had to go through the process of convincing people who were outside of the industry and may not have been using translation services at all… about whether… you know… about whether the standard made sense or not. So, you know… obviously we got a pass and that was not a huge stumbling block, but the new thing this year… uh… is that… there is now a new… we now have our own uh… committee. It used to be that we were a subcommittee of the Consumer Products uh… Committee, of ASTM, but now there is a separate Languages Committee that all of the sub-standards fall underneath, so we have a little bit more control over what we do than we did before.

Oh, I wasn't aware of that…

[5:00]

Yeah, the new Language Committee is F-43.

F-43. [taking notes]

F-43. And that just happened this year.

Real quickly… I noticed when I read it that ASTM F2575 refers to itself as uh… as a guideline rather than a standard. Is that right? How do you differentiate between a guideline and a standard?

Well, yeah, right. It's been a while since I have read it but uh… a standard says that you must do this and you must do that, but a guideline provides uh… guidance on what you need to do. It's basically a discussion on best practices, but uh…

Sure, it keeps it open.

Exactly.

Do you feel like uh… the scope of the standard

[6:00]

was limited intentionally in order to preserve that open-endedness?

Well, uh… it was limited because uh… there is so much that we could uh…it's like how long do you want a piece of string, right? There was so much that we could address in a standard, and you know we worked on this thing for…

the effort for an ASTM standard uh… F2575 started in 1998, you know… and it took us until 2006 to get something published and approved, which is a long process…

Yeah, that is a long process!

so, uh… you want to limit things as much as you can. We chose the guideline because we felt that… uh… and you can go the ASTM website to see the different products that they produce, but uh… we chose the guideline because we felt like uh… it would gain the most acceptance in the industry…

[7:00]

and at the time that we were developing the standard, uh… the ASTM standard was the first translation standard in the industry in the U.S., so there was uh… there was quite a lot of pushback from uh… you know… freelance providers versus agencies, uh you know, it was one of those things where uh… you know… freelancers did not want agencies imposing things on them or telling them how they had to achieve things, and there was a lot of fear that uh… that by putting a standard in place it was going to uh… people were worried that putting a standard in place was going to give agencies more work and it was going to take work away from translators because they were worried that it was going to too closely define what the resources are, uh… who should be used, etc. etc. Of course, these fears turned out to be unfounded in hindsight. This is also why uh… why we steered away from uh… you know…

[8:00]

telling people… what credentials a translator absolutely has to have, you know… you'll see that the definition in there of a provider in there is very loose. So that's the reason uh… that we chose the guideline, we suggest best practices but it's up to you to decide. And it's also the reason why we decided to focus on the specifications and to define quality based on a client's needs versus… trying to make a once and for all definition of quality, because as you know… people are still trying to define quality and they haven't be able to.

Okay. The definition of quality I thought was very innovative because… like you said it's like defining the indefinable… and it seems to me like you get into trouble… uh… you get into trouble when you start getting too specific.

[9:00]

Exactly… exactly… and that's why I really like this standard… above and beyond the fact that I spent so many years of my life working on it… is because it does… I mean beauty is in the eye of the beholder and so is quality, so we put best practices in there about what a standard process to achieve quality should look like in our minds, but uh… but it also says that you can skip these steps or do it in a different way if you understand what the risks are, so I think that not defining quality, but putting it back in the client's hands, not forcing a client into a process or a product that they may not want, or even need for there purposes is uh… I think it's very important. It's like uh… demystifying the translation process a little bit and putting a bit more of the control of the process back into their hands.

[10:00]

I see. Very good… When it comes to this collaborative approach that I'm hearing so much about, uh… what would you call the most significant point of disagreement that came up between the different collaborators that the subcommittee faced during the development of the standard?

Well, uh… it was interesting because we were working with buyers, and uh… we were working with people from government, and people from academia, uh… so I think… I think the hardest part was in defining… the definition… in defining these different terms because different people have different ideas. That's why we felt like defining the different terminology was important, so we spent a lot of time on that. For example, what does "editing" mean? Well, uh… people think of an edit and it seems like it is obvious but different people call it different things. The European standard refers to "review", which is bilingual, and editing is something else, and uh… and we refer to "editing" as bilingual and "proofreading" for us is monolingual,

[11:00]

so uh… there was a lot of back and forth on that. I think… uh… you know… the biggest sticking point was really finding… it took us a long time to come to this idea uh… this idea of defining quality based on client needs and agreeing upon specifications upfront. I think that once we did that, it's not like we sailed through it, but everything became a little bit easier once we defined what the standard was going to do and what the focus was going to be. It became easier to uh… it was easier to discard other things that came up that didn't meet that requirement.

So I would say coming to an agreement on… on our definition, uh… or how we were going to define quality, because uh… we knew that quality was sort of like a "Pandora's box", so we had to figure out a way to define quality in such a way that wasn't uh…

[12:00]

that was not subjective any more… you know… It wasn't one person's opinion versus another… so we… uh we… agreed on the specifications idea, which is very clear. If you agree with your client upfront on how you're going to do things, you know… uh… whether it's a translation only thing or a translation and an edit, if you agree on all of that upfront, and then you've finished, and you go back and you retrace your steps, uh… if you've done those things then you've given that client what they want, what they need, and uh… that's an objective assessment of the situation.

So I think that the hardest thing was uh… was coming to that, and also, initially, uh… the disagreements, or that sort of uh… fear, you know… in the freelancer community that we were doing something that was ultimately going to take work away from them. We had to do a lot of… I mean this thing is aimed at clients, so uh… so ultimately you have to sell this thing to clients once it's published, but our initial hurdle was selling it to freelancers…

[13:00]

Oh, that's interesting…

and to show them that uh… it was going to help them rather than hinder them really.

That's right. Well we freelancers… we feel threatened all the time with all of this new technology coming out… our work just gets more and more threatened all the time! [laughing]

That's right… and the thing too is that… well I think that the selling point really was that this standard is client focused, uh… and uh… the fact that it is client focused gives everybody a common language to speak, so even for freelancers who are agreeing on things with their end client, if they're working with end clients… if you're working with direct clients, and uh… if… if you know that your client is looking at the standard and you're looking at the standard, it makes it easier to uh… to have the same conversation since there is less grey area. So that was another thing as well, was uh… to show people that this was going to be a tool to uh…

[14:00]

You know… to help people grow their business and to make it easier to move forward really.

I see. Wow… I think what you mentioned about the quality definition is very important, uh… because what I have read about product-oriented standards suggests that… well you really get into trouble when you start saying that quality equals this many errors, because… well… that works fine for really specific things, say a translation test, but it doesn't apply well in other areas, does it?

No, exactly… no. Exactly, uh… you know… and that's one of those things where people want to…well, its… as much as the standard provides guidance and the standard helps, language is… it often comes down to differences in opinion, and it is a very personal thing in a lot of ways, and uh…

[15:00]

people always want to say, well look, when you're in manufacturing you can talk about the number of… well not errors, but defective products allowable in a product cycle etc. etc., and so… people are trying to do the same thing with language, you know…. for a client, uh… quality is assumed, of course they want quality, they… they… you know… expect that your translation work is going to be very good and they don't want to hear you start talking about "allowable errors" per so many words, they… they don't want any errors period, so uh… language is different from manufacturing widgets, uh… so we thought that the specifications focus was the most important thing, and you know… If the client wants to talk about measuring quality in that specifications phase and to measure quality based on errors per you know… so many thousand or hundreds of thousands of words in that specifications space, uh… you can make that part of your specifications…

[16:00]

process for that client. Uh… but overall, uh… I don't like to talk about allowable errors. You know… I mean it's a human process so there are going to be errors, and you know… you have to put the best processes in place to minimize that, but you don't want to highlight that to your clients and say you know… you think that a 99.5% accuracy rate is pretty good, because if I were I client I would say "No, I want 100% accuracy!". So uh… that's not something that you want to talk about…

Sure, it's like allowable levels of dirt in food products…

Right, uh… it's like talking about how many bug legs are allowable in my candy bar. It's not something that I want to talk about! [laughing]

Sure… you made an interesting comment when you said… you brought up manufacturing widgets or whatnot. I believe you also mentioned in your e-mail that you were just involved in renewing Syntes ISO certification.

That is correct.

[17:00]

Shifting gears for just a minute here and… talking about uh… about the ISO certification, I understand that the ISO standard is more of a generic quality management system standard.

It is.

Well, what advantages or disadvantages do you see to applying the ISO standard to translation agencies?

Well, the ISO standard is basically an infrastructure to support the process that you have in place, so uh… so ISO doesn't tell you what you have to do, ISO just uh… insists that you do what you say you are going to do. What I like about ISO is that it keeps you focused on your process and uh… the continuous improvement of your process, but uh… but it doesn't tell you what you have to do. There are certain measures that are required and certain things that need to be tracked, but it doesn't tell you what you have to do. ISO is an expert in standards, but uh… but they are not an expert in any of the industries that they do standardization in, and this… this standard has to sort of fit across the board…

[18:00]

for all types of companies, so uh… so really it provides an infrastructure for you to keep your eye on the ball, which I think is very important.

ISO is actually in the process of developing standards uh… for language services, so Beatriz Bennett, who is the CEO of the company where I work, and who is also on the subcommittee that helped develop F2575, uh… is also on the Committee for International Standards, and uh… the international standard is being… uh is based on things that have been pulled from the ASTM standard as well as from the European standard. So uh… I think that

ISO as a standard for any company, but particularly for language services companies, where there is so much confusion where… and again, clients are not able to evaluate the work themselves, uh… gives them a level of comfort…

[19:00]

that you are doing what you say you are doing because it is a standard that it audited by a third party. So uh… it's a great thing to have as an agency, uh… particularly if you are dealing with clients who are also ISO certified because it gives you a common language to speak. So uh… clients can make a certain amount of assumptions about your processes and how rigorous your processes are based on whether or not you are ISO certified, so that's what I think the value of that is.

So would you call the ISO standard a label of quality?

Absolutely.

Would you call the ASTM standard a label of quality in its current form?

I think… I would, but uh… but I think that for it to be a real label of quality going forward there needs to be a certification process in place, which ASTM themselves do not do, so uh… there needs to be a body that certifies against the standard.

[20:00]

There is a certification against the European standard at the moment, there is a certification against the Canadian standard, and we are now… uh… the next stage for us is uh… moving towards certification for the ASTM standard. So right now you are uh… you are sort of self-certified. Basically, uh… you can be certified to ISO standards but uh… you can only be compliant with ASTM standards, which is how we advertise it ourselves, but I think that over time, client are going to want to see an actual certification, and they're going to want to see that it's been actually audited by a third party. But uh… you know… all things come in time.

We're working on that. That's uh… that's the next phase right now, is talking about certification and identifying third party bodies that do certification and that will certify against the ASTM standard.

I see. Well I'm… I'm happy to hear you say that because that is one of the things that…

[21:00]

That's one of the points that I am looking at right now. What are some of the obstacles that you see in using the ASTM standard as the basis… as the basis for a certification procedure?

Well, in terms of certification… uh… well it's the same conversation… people are much more open to standards now than they used to be, uh… it used to be that you would go to a conference…or an event to speak about standards and there would be three or four people in a room to listen to you,

[22:00]

but uh… but now if you go to a conference, like at the ATA, and the room is full of people, so uh… people are obviously very interested in it. The real obstacle right now I guess is finding… discussing how the certification would work and who is going to do it. I think that uh… the real issue is identifying… because ASTM doesn't do it themselves, so uh… we have to find an objective third party to certify against it. I mean, I think there is a lot of discussion because there were people in the industry who were interested in having a certification against ASTM who are interested in certifying themselves, and uh… there were also service providers too, and uh… people in the industry

[23:00]

do not want to open their doors and open their books and open their processes to competitors. So uh… the issue is really going to be to identify… I think it's a great standard and I think it would be really easy to certify against it, but the issue is really going to be to identify who is going to do that and to be sure that they uh… that they don't have any language industry connections.

I see. Finally, do you think that the ATA would be an appropriate body to do that, and if not, do you think that self-certification would be appropriate?

I don't think so. Well, uh… ATA has helped to promote it and has put a lot of support behind developing the uh… the ASTM standard.

[24:00]

Beatriz is actually the representative to the ASTM body, and uh… they're the ones, in conjunction with uh... you know… the National Foreign Language Center in DC, who actually called the original meeting for industry people to talk about developing an industry standard, but uh… they didn't want to develop an uh… an industry standard on their own because uh… they felt like, as an industry body, it would be seen as self-interested and people would not take it seriously, which is why we took it to ASTM, because uh… they are a known entity, they're a respected standards body, and they don't have any language industry connections. So for the same reason that ATA didn't want to directly develop a standard themselves, they can't be certifying… they would not necessarily be an appropriate certifying body for LSPs either.

It would need to be something along the same lines as uh… as the ISO auditors,

[25:00]

who are not industry people themselves, they're uh… they're ISO people. I think uh… that it really needs to be a body outside of the industry that does the certification, because uh… again, that is going to be taken more seriously by a client than certification by the ATA for example.

And in terms of… your other question was about self-certification?

Yes, that's right.

Yeah… I don't think that self-certification is something that people take seriously. Because uh… right now, uh… you can buy the standard and say that you are adhering to it, which we do. In fact, the ASTM standard is very much a part of our processes, and we have it linked to our ISO process as well, but I, uh… I think that without ISO attached to that, I don't think… You know… Clients like to know that you are adhering to something…

[26:00]

and would be happiest if there is an independent certification against that. So, uh… I think… you know… that advertising yourself as complaint with the standard and familiarizing yourself with the standard and making sure that your clients are familiar with it is a good first step, but uh… I think that what we really and truly need to do is to get a third-party certification, because uh… because that is what is going to put everybody's mind at ease I think.

I see. Would ISO be a more appropriate body to do that?

No, because ISO only certifies against their own standards, so, and you know… ultimately, there will be a translation standard with ISO, uh… which will be an international standard, and uh… the ASTM standard will be a part of that, and the European standard will be a part of that, but in the meantime, in the meantime we need to have certification and the ISO process of gaining certification is very slow. But there are a lot of independent possibilities for… you know…

[27:00]

who would do that. I have to sort of familiarize myself a little bit more about what that process entails because there is someone on the committee looking into that, but uh… you basically have these certifying bodies that then have their own people who they would train to become auditors based on what their standards of auditing are, but uh… you need the support of this independent organization, and you know…that's something that we are looking into right now but uh… I wouldn't be able to tell you the names of any of the bodies off the top of my head. I'm actually not able to go to the ATA conference this year because there is just too much happening right now at the office, but that conference is actually happening this week, uh… in Boston, and my Colleague Beatriz is going to be there and we always have ASTM standards meetings in conjunction with the ATA conferences…

[28:00]

so they'll be talking a lot about… about this particular issue so I… I'll have more information once they're back.

Great. Well Steve, I really appreciate your taking the time to speak with me about this.

Yeah, sure… No problem!

Thanks again for being so generous with you time.

Of course! … and if you have any other questions please just let me know!

[28:33] [end of interview]