

TRAN 6900S-090: Special Topics in Spanish-English Translation Studies
Translating American Higher Education Documents
from English Into Spanish:
UNC Charlotte's Undergraduate Admissions Website

Semester: Spring 2007
Meeting times: W, 5-7:45
Location: COED 402

Professor: Dr. Michael Scott Doyle
Office: COED 443, Tel. 687-4274; msdoyle@email.uncc.edu
Office Hours: MW 3:30-4:30 and by appointment

DESCRIPTION. This **Special Topics in Spanish-English Translation Studies** workshop will be devoted to translating portions of the UNC Charlotte Undergraduate Admissions Website from English to Spanish. This will allow us to give something back to the University by making some of its key documents available in Spanish, which serves a public relations purpose while also providing Hispanic/Latino applicants and parents (extended family) with information about UNC Charlotte and its admission processes.

The discourse domain is technical, as it relates to specialized terminology used in American higher education. At the beginning of the class, we have been given 12 documents to translate, a total of 6,805 words. The documents are the following:

Document #	Document Name	# Words
1	Menu	41
2	Academic Requirements	247
3	Application Information	38
4	Estimated Costs	316
5	Visit the Campus	159
6	Checklist for Admitted Students	633
7	Academic Services	781
8	Out-of-State Student Information	2406
9	Scholarship Information	932
10	Student Orientation Advising and Registration	197
11	University Profile	300
12	Degrees Offered	755
TOTAL WORDS		6,805

The ATA certification examination, which lasts three hours, requires the translation of three passages, each one 225-275 words in length. This means that we (or professional translators) currently have about 30 hours worth of documents to translate. We will begin with these 12 documents, then possibly add others to work on, as the semester progresses. If added, other documents may either be from the UNC Charlotte Undergraduate Admissions Website or may include the LCS M.A. in Spanish website, if Undergraduate Admissions is unable to provide us with additional documents. We will also edit and “correct” translations, using the ATA criteria for standard error marking **The instructor reserves the right to revise this syllabus as deemed necessary, making adjustments based on an ongoing assessment of the time needed to do the translations from week to week.**

OBJECTIVES. The course is designed to provide the student with:

- Practice in preparing professional translations of documents related to American higher education
 - Education in general is a field that requires many different types of translation, i.e. possible employment in translation
- Experience working with different translator's resources
 - Resourcefulness in problem solving
- An understanding and application of the ATA Code of Professional Conduct and Business Practices
- An understanding of the ATA standards and criteria for assessment of competence and professional translation, which

serves as preparation for taking the ATA Certification Exam

- A professional discourse for talking about translation quality, standards, and assessment criteria

LEARNING DISABILITIES. Students with documented disabilities who require accommodations in this class must consult with and formally access services as soon as possible through the UNC Charlotte Office of Disability Services. Students must follow the instructions of that office, located in Fretwell Building #230, for securing appropriate accommodations.

GUIDELINES. Come to every class **very well prepared.** Your active, high-quality participation is expected, it should be a given. Should extenuating circumstances require that you miss a class, you are expected to notify me in advance. More than two (2) unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered automatically by five points (half a letter grade) for each absence thereafter.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION. **Note: The grading will be stringent. The homework portion below is subject to a redistribution of the grade per assignment (the current 8% each) if additional documents are added to the semester's work.**

10% = Class Participation (includes attendance, quantity and quality of discussion and contributions, improvement, attitude)

64% = Homework (translations = 8% each for the following groupings of or individual documents):

1-3	8
4-5	9
6	10-11
7	12

10% = Two Process Papers (5% each)

16% = Final Exam (simulation of ATA Certification Exam, using an educational text from the UNC Charlotte webpage)

NOTE ON PROCESS PAPERS ABOVE. Short papers, 500-600 words in length, in which you will identify and explain the translation problems or challenges you have encountered in doing your translations of the UNC Charlotte Undergraduate Admissions Website, and justify your proposed (theory-based) solutions. In short, these brief papers will document your resourcefulness and problem-solving process as a translator. They will help you map out who you are as a translator and how you proceed when faced with certain translation situations.

NOTE. The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, May 9, 5-7:30 p.m. in COED 402.

GRADING SCALE

A = 90-100 POINTS

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = BELOW 60

NOTE: APRIL 14-15, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, CATI CONFERENCE HOSTED AT UNC CHARLOTTE! YOUR ATTENDANCE ALL DAY SATURDAY IS REQUIRED AND WILL COUNT AS THE TWO CLASS MEETINGS OF MARCH 28 AND APRIL 11. (ALTERNATIVE: ATTEND ENGLISH/SPANISH COMMUNITY INTEPRETER WORKSHOP, SPONSORED BY CATI ON SATURDAY FEB 17)

Week 1

January 10 Introduction to course. Visit by Regena Y. Brown, Assistant Director of Admissions, to explain the translation project for the semester. Syllabus. ATA Certification Criteria, Standards, and Assessment.

For next class, translate documents 1, 2, and 3.

Week 2

- January 17 Carefully review at home the ATA Certification Exam standards and criteria that have been distributed with this syllabus—make sure you understand these! Visit the ATA Web Page at www.atanet.org.
- Find at least five resources to use for the translation of terminology related to undergraduate admissions at American colleges and universities. We will discuss and share this information in class.
- Workshop review of translations of documents 1, 2, and 3. Editing.
- For next class, translate documents 4 and 5.

Week 3

- 24 Workshop review of translations of documents 4 and 5. Editing.
- For next class, translate document 6.

Week 4

- 31 Workshop review of translations of document 6. Editing.
- For next class, translate first half of document 7: “Academic Services: Summer Advantage” through “Honors Programs.”

Week 5

- February 7 Workshop review of translations of first half of document 7. Editing.
- For next class, translate second half of document 7: “University Center for Academic Excellence” through “Disability Services.”

Week 6

- 14 Workshop review of translations of second half of document 7. Editing.
- For next class, translate first third of document 8: “Information for our out-of-state students: What to expect after your move” through “General Rules.”

Week 7

- 21 Workshop review of translations of first third of document 8. Editing.
- For next class, translate second third of document 8: “Information for our out-of-state students: “Frequently Asked Questions” through “9. I’m afraid that I’ll have a hard time. . .”

Week 8

- 28 Workshop review of translations of second third of document 8. Editing.
- For next class, translate last third of document 8: “10. Do you know whether the school. . .” through “17. Because I am out-of-state. . .” First process paper due.

Week 9

- March 7 SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS.

Week 10

- March 14 Workshop review of translations of last third of document 8. Editing.
For next class, translate first half of document 9: "UNC Charlotte Scholarships for Merit" through "Bonnie E. Cone Scholarships"

Week 11

- 21 Workshop review of translations of first half of document 9. Editing.
For next class, translate second half of document 9: "E. K. Fretwell Scholarships" through "Childress Klein Scholarships"

Week 12

- 28 **EL PROFESOR ESTARÁ EN OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY.**

Week 13

- April 4 Workshop review of translations of second half of document 9. Editing.
For next class, translate documents 10 and 11, and begin working on document 12.

Week 14

- 11 **EL PROFESOR ESTARÁ EN IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY.** Second process paper due.

NOTE: APRIL 14-15, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, CATI CONFERENCE HOSTED AT UNC CHARLOTTE! YOUR ATTENDANCE ALL DAY SATURDAY IS REQUIRED AND WILL COUNT AS THE TWO CLASS MEETINGS OF MARCH 28 AND APRIL 11. (ALTERNATIVE: ATTEND ENGLISH/SPANISH COMMUNITY INTERPRETER WORKSHOP, SPONSORED BY CATI ON SATURDAY FEB 17)

Week 15

- 18 Workshop review of translations of documents 10 and 11, and beginning of document 12. Editing.
For next class, finish translating document 12.

Week 16

- 25 Last day of class. Workshop review of translations of document 12. Editing. Student evaluations.

NOTE. The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, May 9, 5-7:30 p.m. in COED 402.

DOYLE ON THE ATA MODEL OF TRANSLATION ASSESSMENT

The ATA Framework for Standard Error Marking serves as a ready-made, standardized, time-tested, and professionally-recognized model for conducting systematic, coherent, and consistent evaluation of student translations.

Evaluation and outcomes assessment are thorny issues in American higher education and in our professional lives. They are time-consuming activities and are often difficult to map out clearly because of the types of questions they deal with, such as what is being measured, how, when, and why. But good faith engagement in assessment is a critical component of any pedagogical undertaking, and coherent curricular design would do well to envision carefully the desired learning outcomes that will later be measured, such that accountability and continuous improvement are factored into a pedagogical cycle or flow: ENVISIONED OUTCOMES → COURSE OR PROGRAM DESIGN → INSTRUCTION → OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT → MODIFICATION AND IMPROVEMENT → NEW CYCLE.

Course grades remain the most characteristic form of outcomes assessment in academia. As we all know, grades can be a source of considerable confusion and consternation because:

- Different instructors can be quite idiosyncratic in how they arrive at their A's, B's and C's, and one may assign a high grade while the other does not in evaluating the same assignment;
- Students may ask that a grade be explained, and instructors are often hard-pressed to do so, perhaps because their own criteria and standards have not been clearly thought-out and/or articulated, which leads to a justification along the lines of "this is my [subjective] impression of the grade you have earned..."
- Students may earn good grades in class, then fare poorly on external evaluation instruments such as standardized national examinations—i.e., the "in-class" and "out-of-class" assessment criteria and standards are not well aligned;
- Training and academic programs may lack coherence and consistency in how they evaluate their students (there is no culture of inter-rater reliability), and themselves be idiosyncratic and misaligned with national standards, discourse, and practice.

The ATA Framework for Standard Error Marking provides a ready-made, standardized, time-tested, and professionally-recognized model for conducting systematic, coherent, and consistent evaluation of student translations. Adoption of the ATA standards and criteria has several other benefits as well, among them:

- Linking the student classroom work, feedback, and discussion to the external professional context in the United States, as represented by the ATA;
- Providing students and instructors with a protocol and common language for translation assessment that is aligned with the criteria, standards, and discourse of our national accrediting (now certifying) association, which serves to foster a culture of inter-rater reliability wherein we can "be on the same page" when discussing what is right or wrong about a translation;
- Better preparing students for taking the ATA Accreditation Exam by familiarizing them with the national standards and criteria before they sit for the Exam;
- Aligning the programmatic discourse of our colleges and universities with established national standards.

*Welcome to
the American Translators Association*

Code of Professional Conduct and Business Practices

I. As a Translator or Interpreter, a bridge for ideas from one language to another and one culture to another, I commit myself to the highest standards of performance, ethical behavior, and business practices.

A. I will endeavor to translate or interpret the original message faithfully, to satisfy the needs of the end user(s). I acknowledge that this level of excellence requires:

1. mastery of the target language equivalent to that of an educated native speaker,
2. up-to-date knowledge of the subject material and its terminology in both languages,
3. access to information resources and reference materials, and knowledge of the tools of my profession,
4. continuing efforts to improve, broaden, and deepen my skills and knowledge.

B. I will be truthful about my qualifications and will not accept any assignments for which I am not fully qualified.

C. I will safeguard the interests of my clients as my own and divulge no confidential information.

D. I will notify my clients of any unresolved difficulties. If we cannot resolve a dispute, we will seek arbitration.

E. I will use a client as a reference only if I am prepared to name a person to attest to the quality of my work.

F. I will respect and refrain from interfering with or supplanting any business relationship between my client and my client's client.

II. As an employer or contractor of translators and/or interpreters, I will uphold the above standards in my business. I further commit myself to the following practices with translators and interpreters:

A. I will put my contractual relationship with translators and interpreters in writing and state my expectations prior to work.

B. I will adhere to agreed terms, payment schedules, and agreed changes, and will not capriciously change job descriptions after work has begun.

C. I will deal directly with the translator or interpreter about any dispute. If we cannot resolve a dispute, we will seek arbitration.

D. I will not require translators or interpreters to do unpaid work for the prospect of a paid assignment.

E. I will not use translators' or interpreters' credentials in bidding or promoting my business without their consent or without the bona fide intention to use their services.

F. For translations for publication or performance over which I have direct control, I will give translators recognition traditionally given authors.

As Amended by the ATA Board of Directors March 2002

ABOUT THE ATA AND THE ATA CERTIFICATION PROGRAM, Jan 4, 2007: www.atanet.org

ATA, founded in 1959, is a professional association founded to advance the translation and interpreting professions and foster the professional development of individual translators and interpreters. Its 9,500 members in more than 70 countries include translators, interpreters, teachers, project managers, web and software developers, language company owners, hospitals, universities, and government agencies. Association membership is available to individuals (Active, Corresponding, Associate, Student) and organizations (Corporate, Institutional).

WHAT IS ATA CERTIFICATION?

The ATA certification program was implemented in 1973. More than 2,000 ATA members are currently certified, many in more than one language pair. A testament to a translator's professional competence to translate from one specific language to another, certification is awarded after a candidate passes an open-book examination administered under controlled conditions. Certification is available only to ATA members and remains valid as long as membership in the Association continues; certification automatically converts membership from associate membership to active or corresponding membership status.

ATA CERTIFICATION

- is a testament to a translator's professional competence in translating from one specific language into another
- is available to candidates who offer proof of eligibility to take the examination based on education and experience
- is awarded after a candidate passes an open-book examination administered under controlled conditions
- comes with the obligation to continually improve professional skills through continuing education
- is available only to Association members and remains valid as long as membership in the Association is continued
- automatically converts membership from associate membership to active or corresponding membership status
- is currently available into English from Arabic, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish
- is currently available from English into Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Ukrainian

SKILLS TO BE TESTED

The certification examination tests the language skills of a professional translator:

- Comprehension of the source-language text.

Criterion: Translated text reflects a sound conceptual understanding of the material presented.,

- Translation techniques.

Criteria: Translated text conveys the full meaning of the original. Common translation pitfalls are avoided. Dictionaries are used effectively. Sentences are recast appropriately for target-language style and flow.

- Writing in the target language.

Criteria: Translated text is coherent. Grammar, punctuation, spelling, syntax, usage and style are appropriate.

BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

Certification offers objective evidence to both translator and client that the translator possesses professional competence in a specific language combination.

Passing the certification exam automatically converts an Associate membership to an Active membership (or to Corresponding membership for those who are neither U.S. citizens nor permanent residents). Student members, who have paid discounted membership dues, must advance to Active or Corresponding membership by paying the additional \$65 in dues. Active and Corresponding members are entitled to be listed as ATA-certified in the [Directory of Translation and Interpreting Services](#). Only Active and Corresponding members may vote in Association matters.

Certified translators may refer to their certification in their résumés, business stationery, cards, and other related materials, provided they specify the language pair(s) and direction(s).

ELIGIBILITY

Individuals who have been ATA members for at least four weeks and meet our [eligibility requirements](#) may take a certification examination. This lead-time is necessary to allow proper processing of the membership application.

Once awarded, certification is valid and may be claimed only as long as the certified person remains a member of ATA in good standing and fulfills the [continuing education requirements](#).

NATURE OF THE EXAMINATION

The certification examination is a three-hour, open-book, proctored exam in a specific language pair (i.e., one specific source language and one specific target language). The exam presents three passages of approximately 225-275 words. One is a general passage and is mandatory for everyone. The candidate must also choose one of the other two passages to translate: one will be from the domain of science/technology/medicine and the other will be from the domain of law/business/finance. Both passage translations must meet ATA certification standards for a passing grade.

Again, the discourse domains for the three examination passages are:

*General
Science, Technology, Medicine
Law, Business, Finance*

Before taking the exam, candidates must sign a statement acknowledging that they know they will be informed only of the final result of the exam, without comments from graders, and that the exam will remain the property of ATA.

Candidates who fail the examination may apply for [certification exam review](#).

Except for persons with disabilities, who may use non-memory typewriters, the exams must be written by hand. **No electronic equipment of any kind is permitted at the exam sitting.**

NATURE OF THE PASSAGES

There are three passages. Each passage contains about 225–275 words in English, or the equivalent in another language (e.g., 325–400 characters from the Japanese writing system). The passages present common translation challenges that may vary from one language combination to another. The level of difficulty is comparable to the level that professional translators would expect to see in their daily work. One passage is mandatory for all candidates. This general text is written for the educated lay reader in expository or journalistic style.

Each candidate must also choose between two elective passages, one from the domain of science/technology/medicine and one from the domain of law/business/finance. These passages have the character of typical texts within these domains but should not contain specialized terminology or require mastery of a particular field.

A candidate should complete only two passages: the mandatory general passage and one of the two elective passages. If a candidate does not follow instructions and translates both elective passages, the ATA certification program staff will arbitrarily select one of the two for grading. A passage that is substantially incomplete is not graded.

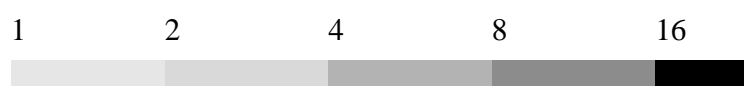
GRADING

The exams are graded according to a point marking system. The grader identifies errors by category according to the long-established Framework for Standardized Error Marking. The grader assigns 1, 2, 4, 8, or 16 error points for each error. This scale reflects experienced graders' judgments about the relationships among different types of errors and about what sorts of errors might be allowed in a translation that meets ATA standards.

Old System:



New system:



In addition, a grader may award quality points for specific instances of exceptional translation. (Quality points are not awarded for overall “artistic impression.”) Each exceptionally good rendition may be awarded one quality point, up to a total of three quality points per passage.

Examples of renditions earning quality points include

- choice of a particularly felicitous word or phrase
- exceptionally skillful casting of a sentence or sentences
- target-language rendition that precisely mirrors ambiguity in source text

Any quality points are subtracted from the error point total to yield a final score. A passage with a score of 18 or more points receives a grade of Fail.

Although the use of points may impart a certain impression of objectivity, it is in truth still subjective. In no way is the score on each passage meant to be a percentage. An error score of 20 for example, does *not* mean that 80% of the passage is correct. The error score is simply a number that, along with the error scale that generates it, embodies the graders' understanding of translation quality and certification standards.

CATEGORIES OF ERRORS

Illegible: It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the graders can clearly understand what is written. Candidates are instructed to use pen or dark pencil and to write firmly enough to produce legible photocopies. Deletions, insertions, and revisions are acceptable if they do not make the intent unclear.

Misunderstanding of original text: This category applies when the grader can see—usually by back-translating the target-language text—that the error arises from misreading a word, for example, or misinterpreting the syntax of a sentence. In other words, the result is wrong because the translation was based on a misunderstood source text.

Mistranslation into target language: The meaning of the original text is not conveyed properly in the target language. For example, a term in the translated text might be much more general (*scientists* instead of *researchers*, *protein* instead of *albumin*) or more specific (*stallion* instead of *horse*) than the original term. Mistranslations can also involve the choice of prepositions, the use of definite and indefinite articles, and the choice of verb tense and mood.

In the context of this examination, regionalisms should be avoided if a more generally used word is available. (Although graders should be alert to the possibility of regionalisms and make allowances for those they recognize or can identify by research, candidates are advised not to present them with unnecessary challenges.)

Addition or omission: Something is inserted that is not clearly expressed in the original text, or something essential to the meaning is left out. The tendency to insert "clarifying" material should generally be resisted. It is permissible to shorten the ponderous modes of expression that are common in some source texts, so long as the meaning does not suffer.

Terminology, word choice: This error often involves terms used in various technical contexts. In an article about a nuclear reactor, for example, the German word *Brüter* should be translated as *breeder* rather than *incubator*. This also applies to legal and financial contexts where words often have very specific meanings. In more general texts, the candidate might not have selected the most appropriate word among several that have similar (but not identical) meanings.

Register: The register (language level, degree of formality) of the source text should be preserved in the translation. Examples of errors include using everyday words instead of medical terms (*spit* instead of *saliva*), translating a legal text into a journalistic style, using the familiar rather than the polite form of address (French *tu/vous*, German *du/Sie*), and using anachronistic or culturally inappropriate expressions.

Too freely translated: Candidates are asked to translate the meaning and intent of the source text, not to rewrite it or improve upon it. The grader will carefully compare the translation to the source text. If a "creative" rendition changes the meaning, an error will be marked. If recasting a sentence—i.e., altering the order of its major elements—destroys the flow, changes the emphasis, or obscures the author's intent, an error may be marked.

Too literal, word-for-word translation: Translations that follow the source text exactly may result in awkward, often incorrect renditions. Translate literally when it works, but not at the expense of clarity and natural syntax.

False cognate: In some language pairs, this is the most common type of error.
English into Spanish:

officials (funcionarios) translated as oficiales
application [form](solicitud) translated as aplicación

Indecision—gave more than one option: Graders will not choose the right word for the candidate. Even if both options are correct, an error will be marked. More points will be deducted if one or both options are incorrect. Candidates should not add clarifications unless readers from the target-language culture will surely miss the meaning without them; nor should they use asterisks, footnotes, brackets, or other hedging devices.

Example: Spanish: *al comienzo* ([*al principio*])
English: *in the beginning* [*at first*]

Inconsistency (same term translated differently): In general, a term that is used consistently in the source text should be translated consistently into the target language. Conversely, if the source text uses different terms for the same idea interchangeably, the candidate should attempt to come up with a similar variety in the target language. (Of course, graders recognize that this is not always possible.)

Ambiguity: If the meaning is clear in the source text but ambiguous in the translation, an error may be marked. The reader should not have to puzzle out the meaning.

Examples in English:

To reduce risks to the human embryo, in-depth studies on suitable laboratory animals are needed. (clear)

In-depth studies on suitable laboratory animals are required to reduce risks to the human embryo. (ambiguous)

The probability of birth defects in humans increases as more animal species react with developmental defects. (clear)

The probability of birth defects in humans increases the more animal species react with developmental defects. (ambiguous)

Grammar: Grammatical errors include lack of agreement between subject and verb, incorrect verb tenses or verb forms, incorrect case of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives, and use of an adjective where an adverb is needed.

Syntax: The arrangement of words or other elements of a sentence should conform to the rules of the target language. Errors in this category include sentence fragments, improper modification, lack of parallelism, and unnatural word order. If incorrect syntax changes or obscures the meaning, the error is more serious.

Examples in English:

The cupboard was infested with moths that organic foods enjoy.

Climbing the mountain, the cabin came into view.

She skis, plays tennis, and rock climbing.

The from Berlin coming and now on platform 12 arriving express train is two hours late.

Punctuation: The conventions of the target language should be followed, including those governing the use of accents and other diacritical marks, quotation marks, commas, semicolons, and colons. Incorrect or unclear paragraphing is counted as an error.

Spelling: There is less tolerance of spelling errors in some languages than in others, for reasons that derive from the language itself as well as from the national culture. In all languages, a spelling error that causes confusion about the intended meaning is more serious.

Examples in English:

The student disagreed with the principle / principal.
The specialists agreed that systemic / systematic treatment was required.
The men set out early to peddle / pedal their bicycles through the town.

Also, if a word has alternate spellings (such as *periodo* or *período* in Spanish, *scanner* or *scanneur* in French), the candidate should be consistent throughout the passage.

Accents and other diacritical marks: The conventions should be followed consistently. If incorrect or missing diacritical marks obscure the meaning, the error is more serious.

Case (upper/lower): The conventions of the target language should be followed.

Examples:

Cien años de soledad (correct Spanish title)
One Hundred Years of Solitude (correct English title)

Word Form: The root of the word is correct, but the wrong form is used.

Examples in English:

The product has been tampered with and is no longer safety.

los sitios de interés turístico translated as the touristic sites

The new Beetle is an economic car.

Usage: Correct and idiomatic usage of the target language is expected. Errors include use of the wrong preposition or misuse of a grammatical form.

Example in English:

He is married to (not with) my sister.

They were suspected of breaking (not to break) the rules.

I am going to take (not make) a walk.

He committed (not performed) a crime.

Style: If the source text is characterized by a distinctive manner of expression—flowery, staccato, conversational, instructional—this should be reflected in the translation. Awkward or clumsy renditions that obscure the meaning may also be penalized.

ATA FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARD ERROR MARKING 1/19/05 (Summary prepared by Dr. Michael Scott Doyle, UNC Charlotte)	
Code #	Criteria and Description of Each Error
IL	Illegible: It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the graders can clearly understand what is written. Candidates are instructed to use pen or dark pencil and to write firmly enough to produce legible photocopies. Deletions, insertions, and revisions are acceptable if they do not make the intent unclear.
MOT	Misunderstanding of Original Text: This category applies when the grader can see—usually by back-translating the target-language text—that the error arises from misreading a word, for example, or misinterpreting the syntax of a sentence. In other words, the result is wrong because the translation was based on a misunderstood source text.
MTL	Mistranslation into Target Language: The meaning of the original text is not conveyed properly in the target language. For example, a term in the translated text might be much more general (<i>scientists</i> instead of <i>researchers</i> , <i>protein</i> instead of <i>albumin</i>) or more specific (<i>stallion</i> instead of <i>horse</i>) than the original term. Mistranslations can also involve the choice of prepositions, the use of definite and indefinite articles, and the choice of verb tense and mood.
A/O	Addition or Omission: Something is inserted that is not clearly expressed in the original text, or something essential to the meaning is left out. The tendency to insert “clarifying” material should generally be resisted. It is permissible to shorten the ponderous modes of expression that are common in some source texts, so long as the meaning does not suffer.
TER/WC	Terminology, Word Choice: This error often involves terms used in various technical, legal, and financial contexts, where words often have very specific meanings. In more general texts, the candidate might not have selected the most appropriate word among several that have similar (but not identical) meanings.
REG	Register: Language level, degree of formality should be preserved in the translation; examples of errors include using everyday words instead of medical terms (<i>spit</i> instead of <i>saliva</i>), making a legal document sound journalistic, <i>tú/usted</i> , anachronisms, and culturally inappropriate expressions.
TFT	Too Freely Translated: Candidates are asked to translate the meaning and intent of the source text, not to rewrite or improve upon it. The grader will carefully compare the translation to the source text. If a “creative” rendition changes the meaning, an error will be marked. If recasting a sentence—i.e., altering the order of its major elements—destroys the flow, changes the emphasis, or obscures the author's intent, an error may be marked.
TLT	Too Literal, Word-for-Word: Translations that follow the source text exactly may result in awkward, often incorrect renditions. Translate literally when it works, but not at the expense of clarity and natural syntax.
FC	False Cognate: In some language pairs, this is the most common type of error. Examples from English and Spanish: officials (<i>funcionarios</i>) translated as <i>oficiales</i> ; application [form] (<i>solicitud</i>) translated as <i>aplicación</i> ; <i>actualmente</i> (<i>presently, currently, nowadays</i>) translated as <i>actually</i> .
IND	Indecision, Giving More than One Option: Graders will not choose the right word for you. Even if both options are correct, an error will be marked; more points are deducted if one or both options are incorrect. Do not use asterisks, footnotes, brackets, or other hedging devices; do not add clarifications unless readers from the target language will surely miss the meaning without them.
INC	Inconsistency, Same Term Translated Differently: In general, a term that is used consistently in the source text should be translated consistently into the target language. Conversely, if the source text uses different words for the same idea interchangeably, the candidate should try to come up with a similar variety in the target language.
AMB	Ambiguity: If the meaning is clear in the source text but ambiguous in the translation, an error may be marked. The reader should not have to puzzle out the meaning.
G	Grammar: Grammatical errors include lack of agreement between subject and verb, incorrect verb forms, incorrect case of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives, and use of an adjective where an adverb is needed.
SYN	Syntax (Phrase/Clause/Sentence Structure): The arrangement of words or other elements of a sentence should conform to the rules of the target language. Errors in this category include sentence fragments, improper modification, lack of parallelism, and unnatural word order. If incorrect syntax changes or obscures the meaning, the error is more serious.
P	Punctuation: The conventions of the target language should be followed, including those governing the use of quotation marks, commas, semicolons, and colons. Incorrect or unclear paragraphing is counted as an error.
SP	Spelling: There is less tolerance of spelling errors in some languages than others, for reasons that derive from the language itself as well as from the national culture. In all languages, a spelling error that causes confusion about the intended meaning is more serious (e.g., principle/principal, systemic/systematic, peddle/pedal, dear/deer, bear/bare, sight/site, tasa/taza, vasto/basto). Context is a factor as well.
A/DM	Accents and Other Diacritical Marks: The conventions of the target language should be followed consistently. If incorrect or missing diacritical marks obscure the meaning, the error is more serious.
C	Case (Upper/Lower): The conventions of the target language should be followed. Examples: <i>Cien años de soledad</i> (correct Spanish title) vs. <i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i> (correct English title).
WF	Word Form: The root of the word is correct, but the wrong form is used. Example in English: <i>The product has been tampered with and is no longer safety.</i>
U	Usage: Correct and idiomatic usage of the target language is expected. Errors include the use of the wrong preposition or misuse of a grammatical form. Examples: <i>take</i> vs. <i>make a walk</i> , <i>married to</i> vs. <i>married with</i> , etc.
STY	Style: If the source text is characterized by a distinctive manner of expression—flowery, staccato, conversational, instructional—this should be reflected in the translation. Awkward or clumsy renditions that obscure the meaning may also be penalized.
NOTE: Avoid the claim of words “not in dictionary”: You are expected to determine meaning from context, to recognize irregular verb forms, root-word derivations, compound words, proper names, and close cognates.	

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ATA CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Q: What is the most common avoidable mistake?

A: Careless omissions. When you finish a passage, take a minute to check whether you have omitted a title, a heading, an item in a bullet list, a sentence, or an entire paragraph.

Q: Can I take more than one test at a sitting?

A: You may only take one test at an exam sitting.

Q: Do I need to bring a calculator to convert measures, distances, money, and the like?

A: You are not expected to make these mathematical conversions. You will not be penalized if you convert correctly, but you will if the conversion is wrong.

Q: Can I break a long, complicated sentence into two or more shorter ones?

A: Yes, provided nothing is added or omitted to change the meaning. Be cautious about this in a legal passage.

Q: What should I do if I find an error in the source text?

A: If you find a typographical error, please tell us in a note at the end of your translation of that passage. (Don't just write it on the exam passage itself—it might not be noticed.)

If it's clear from the context what the correct spelling or wording should be, adjust your translation accordingly.

Example: *Brot un Butter* instead of *Brot und Butter* (don't translate as *bread an butter*).

If the error is debatable, do the best you can with what's there. Example: If you think *odd style* should really be *old style*, translate *odd style* and add a note suggesting that there's a typo. If you translate *old style* and you're wrong about the typo, an error will be marked.

Q: When will I find out whether I passed or failed?

A: Allow at least fifteen weeks. There are periods of the year with a high concentration of exam sittings and the waiting period may increase.

Q: Why does it take so long?

A: The exams are sent to ATA Headquarters and photocopied, then mailed to two graders (working translators in the United States and abroad who receive an honorarium for their services to this ATA program). If these graders disagree on the pass/fail outcome of an exam, they consult each other to seek agreement. If they cannot reach agreement, the exam is sent to a third grader, who in turn may consult with the initial graders or other graders in the workgroup. These steps can add substantial time to the grading process. After the graded exams are returned to Headquarters, the results are recorded and you are notified by mail.

Q: Does the grader know who I am?

A: No.

Q: When will I get my exam back to see my errors?

A: The exam is a no-comment, no-return exam. You will be notified only whether you pass or fail.

Q: Is there any way to see my exam and the marked errors?

A: If you pass, you will not see your exam. If you fail, the Certification Review process allows you to see your exam and the marked errors.

Q: How do I apply for a review?

A: The review process, like all other components of the Certification Program is only open to current members of ATA. You must remain a member of ATA in order to apply for an examination review. You have a year from the date that you take your exam to pay a fee of \$100 and apply for a review, but the review will not take place until new exam passages are issued at the following annual conference. The policy and request forms are available on the ATA Web site and from our offices.

If you apply for a review during the same exam year in which you took the exam, your test should be sent to a grader in January of the following year. If you apply for a review after January, reviews will be batched and completed periodically.

Q: How does the review procedure work?

A: Your record is scrutinized at Headquarters for possible processing errors and to make sure you are a current member of ATA. Photocopies of the graded passages are then sent to a reviewer, who evaluates the errors to determine whether they conform to the grading criteria. The reviewer also grades the exam again.

In the case of a reversal, the review fee paid is refunded, and you receive a certificate of certification, dated as of the original notice of failure. Your name is published in the *ATA Chronicle* with the names of other recently certified members. No disclosure is made of the fact that certification was awarded based on a review. You will not see your exam.

If the reviewer upholds the grade of “fail,” you will receive copies of one or both passages with at least the minimum number of errors marked to substantiate the result, along with the source text. You may not appeal the outcome of the review procedure.

If you are interested in taking the review mainly to discover your errors and avoid them for a future exam sitting, you may receive more benefit from waiting until the new exam year begins and taking the failed passages as practice test passages. A review does not necessarily identify all errors.

Q: How does a person become a grader for the ATA certification program?

A: Graders are selected from among ATA members who are certified in the language combination they will grade. Some are translators who performed especially well on the examination; others are recommended by current graders, or express an interest to the program administrator at ATA Headquarters. As part of the selection process, potential graders are asked to grade a previously marked exam, which is then reviewed to determine that the grading conforms to the established grading guidelines.

Being a grader also requires special talents. Not all good translators make good graders. Grading requires a mix of translation skill and knowledge in the source language and the target language, flexibility, creativity, an open mind and a commitment to ATA and the profession.

We are looking for a few good graders to join some of our grading workgroups. The invitation is open to anyone who is currently certified by ATA. Graders are paid a stipend, but it does not begin to match a translator’s salary. Please contact Headquarters for more information.

Q: Why can’t we use computers for the exam?

A: The primary reason is a combination of practicality and fairness. With exam sittings held all over the country, and increasingly around the world, it would be a logistical nightmare for the certification program to provide appropriate computers for all exam candidates. Allowing some candidates to use laptops would give them an advantage over candidates who don’t.

Finally, if any candidates used computers, the issue of exam security would require the certification program to change passages much more often. Because passage selection and preparation is both difficult and time-consuming, it’s possible that the quality of the passages would suffer.

However, the Certification Committee is looking to the future and investigating ways to overcome these obstacles.

Q: How often are the exam passages changed?

A: So that candidates who fail can take the exam again, new passages are introduced each year at the ATA Conference. In addition, passages may be modified or new passages introduced at any time during the exam year. Because passages may be used again, candidates are bound by a confidentiality agreement not to discuss or reveal the contents of the examination. Violation of this agreement may be grounds for loss of certification.

Q: I'm a well respected medical [legal, technical] translator, but I can't seem to pass the certification exam. Why not?

A: The only way to be sure of the reasons you failed is to apply for review. If you don't want to do that, another option is to take a practice test, which will give you some feedback on the types of errors you may be making. Keep in mind that candidates frequently do well in one passage category, but not in another. The exam is not directed to one particular specialty area.

Q: I have X years of experience as a translator already. Is there any value to practice tests for me?

A: Again, the practice test is a way for you to see what a certification passage is like, how it is graded, and what types of pitfalls to avoid when taking the exam.

Q: How does the practice test program work?

A: Practice tests are exam passages from previous years, graded by the same people who grade the exams. Your practice test will be returned with any errors marked and explained.

Q: Which of the three passages is used for the practice test?

A: You can request a practice test in any of the three passage categories. If you do not specify, a general passage will be sent. Each practice test costs \$40, and you can request as many as three.

Q: How will certification help me? Will it guarantee me a job?

A: ATA certification will not guarantee you work, but it can help. While there are other ways to prove yourself in the marketplace, translation agencies, bureaus and clients often look for certification as an initial criterion when hiring a translator. ATA certification is the only widely recognized measure of competence in translation.