

An instrument for assessing the quality of local government translations

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An instrument for assessing the quality of local government translations has been sorely needed within LOGTIS, a local government translation and interpreting service which has been instituted in several Free State municipalities. Texts have had to be translated on a regular basis, without any means of assessing the quality of the translations. This article describes the development of an instrument to assess a translation that differs from its source text in form, function and purpose. The instrument incorporates textual and translation principles at all levels of language and can also serve as a checklist for the writing of local government texts.

'n Instrument vir kwaliteitsassessering van plaaslike regeringsvertalings

Die behoefte aan 'n instrument waarmee die kwaliteit van plaaslike regeringsvertalings geassesseer kan word, bestaan binne LOGTIS, 'n vertaal- en tolkdienst op plaaslike regeringsvlak, wat in verskeie Vrystaatse munisipaliteite ingestel is. Tekste moet op 'n gereelde basis vertaal word en tot nou toe het daar geen metode bestaan waarmee die kwaliteit van vertalings geassesseer kon word nie. In hierdie artikel word aangetoon hoe 'n instrument ontwikkel is om 'n vertaling te assesser wat van die bronteks in vorm, funksie en doel verskil. Die instrument inkorporeer teks- en vertaalbeginsels op alle taalvlakke en kan ook gebruik word as 'n kontrolelys by die skryf van plaaslike regeringstekste.

In a most unusual book with an equally unusual title, *Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance: an inquiry into values*, Pirsig (1974: 184) remarks:

Quality ... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists?

This excerpt captures some of the difficulties encountered in the assessment of quality. Quality assessment of translations can prove to be an even more tedious and frustrating endeavour.

This research was undertaken as a result of the need within LOGTIS, a translation and interpreting service instituted in several Free State municipalities, to assess the quality of local government texts. The need is not confined to municipalities alone but also extends to other translation practices. Texts have to be translated on a regular basis without the support of any assessment facility. The problem to be investigated is the following: In what way should the quality of translations differing from their source texts in form, function or purpose be assessed?

In order to define the quality of any product certain questions need to be addressed (Oakland 1995: 8):

What are the quality requirements of my clients?
Am I in a position to meet these requirements?
How will I know if I have complied with the requirements?
Do I continue to comply with these requirements under different circumstances?
How will I know when the requirements have changed?
Is the translator's perception of quality the same as that of the target audience?

The answers to these questions are by no means straightforward and should be preceded by a careful study of the elements of quality. "Quality" is a term used in numerous fields of study and therefore this investigation needed to incorporate the gist of these fields of study. In the world of business and economics, a total quality management model is used. With insights gained from this field, together

with textlinguistic principles, an instrument was developed to assess translations and to serve as a checklist for the writing and assessment of local government texts.

The total quality management model employed in the world of business and economics, will first be introduced. Next, the theoretical framework, the functionalist approach, will be explained, whereafter the quality assessment instrument for assessing the quality of a translation in terms of the translation brief (which determines the text's function for the target audience), developed on textlinguistic principles will be outlined. It will then be shown how this instrument could be used to assess the quality of a source text by serving as a checklist for the writing and translation of source texts. Finally, this assessment instrument will be used to assess the translation of a local government notice, a letter and an application form.

1. The total quality management (TQM) model

In producing quality products, whether specific products or translations, the needs and expectations of the client are very important (Oakland 1995: ix). These may vary from situation to situation and should therefore be gleaned from the context in every instance. Requirements and expectations may also change from time to time, hence quality should be regarded as a process to be constantly managed (Morgan & Murgatroyd 1994: 8). The process has both inputs and products. If the products prove unacceptable, the input phase should be assessed in order to localise the problem and to decide on an appropriate remedy. However, quality assurance is much more than the detection and elimination of errors. The design and the assessment of quality should not be seen as autonomous actions. The concept of quality as a goal to be achieved should accompany the product *pari passu* from the outset, as a preventative perspective. This notion paved the way for TQM — total quality management (Oakland 1995: 18; Morgan & Murgatroyd 1994: 8). Everyone has a duty of co-operation in the quest for quality, but a person or department to oversee the entire process is essential of quality assurance (Oakland 1995: 13, McGoldrick 1994: 15). In order to manage quality, an objective system must be set up in order to be able to determine deviations from the norm (Morgan & Murgatroyd 1994: 19).

The principles of TQM may be applied within a local government environment. The production and translation of local government texts should be seen as a process to be monitored by a specific individual or department. In order to oversee this entire process satisfactorily, a proper assessment instrument is required to facilitate the objective assessment of the quality of texts. It may also provide guidelines for the writing of source texts. With this aim in mind, a system of textual differentiation should be advanced. No single criterion should be applied to all texts indiscriminately. For example, the assessment of notices and letters to the public should not be equated with that of internal communications or letters from the public translated for internal use only. It is a *sine qua non* of this quality assessment instrument that it should be functionally adaptable to all types of texts and even to texts with different functions and purposes from those of the source texts, including both internal and external communications. Quality assurance sometimes implies the assessment of both the source and the target text, for instance, where notices are published in more than one language. Sometimes, however, only the contents of a document or letter to the municipality are required for internal use. In the latter case, spelling and punctuation are of lesser importance. Ideally, the assessment instrument would be of such a nature that it could be used for a variety of processes: the writing of source texts, the assessment of translated texts, editing and in-house training of local government personnel involved in the writing and translation of texts, and the training of translation students.

2. Theoretical framework

As has been mentioned, translations are done according to the functionalist approach, the key concept of which is the function or aim (*skopos*) of the text (cf Nord 1991, 1997a, 1997b, 2001). As a general rule, the envisaged function of the target text determines the translation method and strategies to a greater extent than the nature of the source text (cf Naudé 2001: 177).

Formerly, equivalence played a preponderant role in the assessment of the quality of translations. If the translator managed to produce an equivalent target text, it was automatically regarded as a translation of high quality. However, equivalence is an abstract ideal and is there-

fore difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. This is why it has failed as a standard in the assessment of quality. With the advent of functionalist approaches to translation, existing assessment methods became obsolete. Even the assessment instrument of the Institute of Linguists in Britain, which is widely used by translation departments at academic institutions such as UNISA, the University of Port Elizabeth and the University of the Free State, cannot be used for the assessment of target texts with a *skopos* differing from that of the source text. The criteria used by the Institute of Linguists for assessing translations are the following (Munday 2001: 30):

- accuracy: the correct transfer of information and evidence of complete comprehension;
- the appropriate choice of vocabulary, idiom, terminology and register;
- cohesion, coherence and organization, and
- accuracy in technical aspects of punctuation.

The problem with the above-mentioned “instrument” is that texts translated according to the functionalist approach would not pass the criterion of accuracy: the correct transfer of information from the source text to the target text. Within the functionalist approach the *skopos* of the translation brief, rather than the source text, determines the end product. Accurate transfer from the source text to the target text can thus not be assessed. This thus faced the profession with a problem: In what way can the quality of translations whose aim and function differ materially from those of their source texts be assessed? New methods had to be invented in order to assess translations done by means of the functionalist approach — translations with a different *skopos*.

The functionalist approach towards translation created a new awareness of the differences between source and target cultures. The earlier, source-based approach to translation had resulted in a normative assessment on the basis of the principle of equivalence. The model suggested by House (1997: 31) is unique, expressing the view that the source and target texts be compared from a strictly linguistic point of view. Such source-based approaches are hamstrung by the fact that they ignore the socio-cultural circumstances in which the translation has to be produced in order to function meaningfully in the target culture. It is obvious that such a model is useless as far as

the assessment of a target text with a *skopos* different from that of the source text is concerned.

The functionalist approach offers a new challenge: to create a target text which is designed to function in the target culture and yet adheres to the *skopos* or translation brief concerned (Nord 1991: 73). The importance of the text's function is strongly emphasised in the functionalist approach. The concept of text function concerns aspects of the communicative situation, while text type deals with the structural aspects of the text-in-function (Nord 1991: 71-2).

According to Nord (1997a: 40-5; 1997b: 7-9 and 2001: 3-6), a text may have one of four different functions: it may be referential, expressive, appellative or phatic. In translating a text, the translator should determine the function of the text and decide how to deal with this function in the target text. This means that an overall study of a source text is imperative before any assessment is attempted.

3. Developing an assessment instrument

3.1 Principles of textuality

In order to assess texts, it is necessary to determine their nature as well as the prerequisites for a translation to be classified as a high-quality textual product. De Beaugrande & Dressler (1981: 1-11) developed the principles of textuality, which should be incorporated in all texts. The first of these principles is *coherence*, which embodies the significance of the text to the reader — the way in which the reader forms a meaningful interpretation of the text. This is not necessarily a feature of the text, but rather an attribute ascribed to the text by the reader. Failure of the text in this sphere is irredeemable. The assessment instrument incorporates this principle in a unique feature: the top-down method of text assessment. This top-down assessment involves the assessment of the text in its entirety, followed by a similar assessment of the various elements contained in the text.

The second principle is *contextuality*. External factors have a bearing on the options available to the translator and should be taken into consideration. Thirdly, the principle of *intertextuality* proceeds from the presupposition that there are similarities between texts of a related

type and that their translation should therefore follow certain fixed guidelines.

The fourth principle is *intentionality*, which refers to the fact that the intention of the author must be ascertained. Originally the main emphasis in translation was placed on the intention of the author. However, the idea of a text as an autonomous entity has now arisen. It has become important to determine the way in which a text conveys the message through its inherent mechanisms. Attention is now being paid to the important aspects of texts and how they may or should be typified according to certain common features. Nel (1999) makes a basic distinction between communicative and literary texts, the former being relevant to this study. He proceeds to distinguish between three major communicative text types: referential, expressive and persuasive texts. Referential texts may be informative, discursive or instructive. In order to assess the quality of a text, the text type and what it is intended to communicate have to be determined.

The fifth principle is *acceptability*. This does not signify the reader's agreement with the author, but rather that the reader is in a position to determine the type of text the author intended.

The sixth principle is *informativeness*. A text contains both expected (or known) and unexpected (or unknown) information. A text qualifies as informative if the reader is provided with information not previously known. This, however, is not invariably the case.

The last principle is *cohesion*. Cohesion refers to the unity of the text; the way in which sentences and paragraphs form a unified text. Cohesion markers include reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

The principles briefly discussed above form the basis of the proposed quality assessment instrument. The instrument was developed to assess texts and to serve as a checklist for the writing and assessment of local government texts. Together with the principles discussed, the instrument also focuses on the importance of the translation brief and the function of the text for the target audience.

3.2 The quality assessment instrument (Table 1)

First of all the instrument assesses the text in its entirety by looking at its significance in the given context. This reflects coherence, the first principle of textuality. What makes this instrument unique is that it is a top-down model, first assessing the total picture and only afterwards the elements constituting the text.

Next, the conformity of the text function with the requirements of the translation brief and the correspondence of the text type with the text function has to be established. These three issues form the textual aspects of the instrument.

The second category of the instrument concerns content. The accuracy of the information given in the target text has to be verified in terms of the translation brief. This aspect of the instrument is of paramount importance because for the first time accuracy is being determined by means of the translation brief rather than the source text and culture. The instrument also determines the adequacy of the information given.

The third category deals with the construction of the text, and in particular, its logic: the way in which arguments are presented and the evolution of the text. The cohesion and unity of the text — the way sentences and paragraphs are put together — is germane to its construction and has to be determined accordingly.

The fourth category assesses the formulation of the text. In the first instance the compatibility of the language used with the specific context is assessed. This concerns the pragmatic level of language. Secondly, on the stylistic level, a decision should be reached as to the desired degree of formality, which should be in keeping with the content of the text. Thirdly, the syntactic level of language is assessed by investigating the formulation and syntax and determining its degree of compliance with the requirements of the target language. Finally, at the lexicological level, the eligibility of the vocabulary is assessed.

The last category concerns the presentation of the text or translation. First, the instrument assesses the suitability of the format and the layout of the text. Secondly, it determines whether spelling and punctuation requirements are adhered to.

The assessment instrument itself will now be presented in detail.

Table 1: Assessment instrument

Category 1: Textual aspects

1.1 Is the text meaningful given the context?

Not meaningful	1	2	3	4	5	Meaningful
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1.2 Does the text function conform to the requirements of the translation brief?

Inadequately	1	2	3	4	5	Adequately
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1.3 Does the text type correspond with the text function?

Not corresponding	1	2	3	4	5	Corresponding
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Category 2: Content aspects

2.1 Is the information accurate in terms of the translation brief?

Inaccurate	1	2	3	4	5	Accurate
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2.2 Is the information given adequate?

Inadequate	1	2	3	4	5	Adequate
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Category 3: Construction

3.1 Does the text have a logical construction?

Illogical	1	2	3	4	5	Logical
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3.2 Is the text presented cohesively?

Incohesively	1	2	3	4	5	Cohesively
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Category 4: Formulation

4.1 Is the language use suitable, given the context?

Not suitable	1	2	3	4	5	Suitable
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4.2 Does the degree of formality suit the content of the text?

Not suitable	1	2	3	4	5	Suitable
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4.3 Are the formulation and syntax in accordance with the grammatical requirements of the target language?

Inadequately	1	2	3	4	5	Adequately
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4.4 Is the use of words appropriate?

Inappropriate	1	2	3	4	5	Appropriate
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Category 5: Presentation

5.1 Is the format suitable?

Not suitable	1	2	3	4	5	Suitable
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5.2 Are spelling and punctuation requirements met?

Inadequately	1	2	3	4	5	Adequately
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This instrument provides the translator with a checklist to assess translations done according to the functionalist approach. It has been developed to be used primarily for in-service training of local government translators. It could be used for self-evaluation or by a supervisor. It serves a different purpose from that of assessment instruments used in the training of translation students, where a mark has to be calculated. Although a maximum mark of 65 and a minimum of 13 can be obtained by using this instrument, this serves merely as an indication of the quality of the text. However, the mark could be used as a means of determining the progress of a translator as part of in-service training.

It will now be demonstrated that this instrument can be utilised to assess the quality of a source text in the first instance (thus, the instrument could also serve as a checklist for the writing of source texts) and secondly, to determine the quality of a target text. This will be done by means of the assessment of a local government notice, a letter to the public, and an application form.

4. Assessment of texts

4.1 Local government notice

4.1.1 Source text

RESIDENTS NOTICE

Die plaaslike Oorgangsraad van Sasolburg het op hul maandvergadering van 7 Desember 1999 besluit dat geen waarskuwingsbriewe in die toekoms aan laatbetalers of wanbetalers van dienste gestuur word nie.

Die dienste aan die betrokke persele sal summier gestaak word, indien betalings nie op die rekeningstaat datum ontvang is nie. Die datum is die laaste werksdag van die maand. Die samewerking van alle inwoners word verlang vir die stiptelike betaling van munisipale rekenings.

Indien enige navrae, kontak die Finansiële Departement van die Oorgangsraad.

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4.1.2 Target text

During their monthly meeting on the 7th December 1999 the Salsolburg Transitional Local Council decided that in future no warning notices would be sent to late or non-payers of services.

The services to the relevant premises will be terminated immediately, should payments not have been received by the statement date. This date is the last working day of the month. All residents are requested to co-operate by paying their municipal accounts promptly. Should you have any queries, contact the Financial Department of the Transitional Local Council.

4.1.3 Assessment of source text

In assessing this local government notice, it is necessary to determine the text type as a first step. The text in hand is an informative text in the light of certain systemic features. Information is released about a decision made during a monthly meeting. A formal, unemotional style is used to convey the neutral content of the notice. The passive form of the verb is used: "The services to the relevant premises will be terminated". There is an indicative transmission of facts.

No translation brief is provided, but a possible brief could be the translation of this notice into English with accurate transfer of information so as to enable the reader (a resident in the area of the Council) to understand it. The text should be translated into an equivalent text with an exact transfer of the contextual meaning of the source text. This being a public notice, it should be immaculate and correct, free from spelling errors and nebulous statements.

In the assessment of the source text, it is obvious that for an informative text, the information given is unclear and meagre. Uncertainty exists concerning the items "rekeningstaat datum" and "datum is die laaste werksdag van die maand". Not everybody will interpret the indication of these dates in a similar fashion. The "laaste werksdag van die maand" is vague and ambiguous, in that it may differ from situation to situation. Aspects further complicating the matter are, for example, the date of issue, the date of payment, etc. Information such as contact numbers or contact persons should have been provided, in the event of queries. This text may be regarded as only partially successful in the light of the context. Its text function fails

to comply with the translation brief, because accurate information, which is a prerequisite for a notice, has not been supplied. Furthermore, the text does not form a unit. The cohesion of the first two sentences of paragraph two fails, since a copulative is missing. This results in a text which fails to progress in a logical manner. Alternatively, this might have been achieved by the provision of a proper heading, which is lacking in the source text. This poses a problem, because both source and target texts are designed for use as notices to residents. The notice could also have been made much more striking by the use of bold type. Some spelling and punctuation errors are present in the source text: “rekeningstaat datum” instead of “rekeningstaatdatum” and “finansiele” instead of “finansiële”. In the light of the fact that this text is addressed to the public by the municipality, no spelling or punctuation errors should be countenanced. Finally, it is important in a notice of this nature that both the source and the target text are scrupulously correct as both of them will be issued to the public. It is therefore important that the source text be corrected as well.

4.1.4 Assessment of target text

The translation of the notice will now be assessed by means of the proposed instrument.

Category 1: Textual aspects

- Coherence (meaningfulness) of text

As indicated above, this text has very limited success as an informative text. This has serious implications for the target text. The translation brief requires a target text that conveys information accurately. The fact that the notice is addressed to a large number of readers makes it imperative that the information given be accurate, lucid and logically presented. On the basis of the assessment form, this notice could be rated as only incompletely meaningful. The text does not make sense as a whole within the specific context.

- Text function and translation brief

This notice fails to meet the requirements of the translation brief *in toto*, but this is understandable in the light of the problems besetting the source text. The translator neglected to make the adaptations ne-

cessary to produce a meaningful and relevant text within the context. In terms of the functionalist approach, it is permissible for the translator to make changes in order to meet the requirements of the translation brief. The translator should have realised that, bearing the text function in mind, namely the provision of accurate information, the text fails to do justice to the avowed aim of the translation brief. If at all feasible, the translator should consult the author of the source text in order to clarify uncertainties.

- Systemic features

This text displays the systemic features peculiar to an informative text. The content contains neutral facts in a formal style.

Category 2: Content aspects

- Accuracy of information

The information provided in the text is not completely accurate in terms of the translation brief. Terms such as “statement date”, the meaning of which is unclear, might cause confusion. The translator failed to make the text more understandable by translating “Die datum is die laaste werksdag van die maand” as “This date is the last working day of the month”.

This might seem insignificant, but would have enhanced comprehension of the entire text, with the statement date being immediately understood as the last working day of the month. (The confusion with regard to what exactly is meant by the last working day of the month remains problematic, as is the case with the source text.)

- Adequacy of information

The information provided in the text is only partly adequate. The information is vague and meagre because uncertainty exists regarding terms such as “statement date” and “last working day of the month”. Usually municipal accounts are payable by the 15th day of each month, which is then shown as the date of expiry and not as the statement date. Although contact is invited in case of queries, no contact numbers are provided.

Category 3: Construction

- Logical construction

The translator has succeeded in making the construction of the text more logical by the use of the word “this” instead of “the”.

- Cohesion

The target text forms a more cohesive unit than the source text as a result of the change effected by the translator. This is one instance in which the translator has managed to produce a translation of better quality than the source text.

Category 4: Formulation

- Suitable language use

The language used in this text is suitable for the type of text and the message to be conveyed.

- Degree of formality

The degree of formality is satisfactory in the light of the context.

- Formulation and syntax

The first sentence of the target text is markedly improved from that of the source text:

Die Plaaslike Oorgangsraad van Sasolburg het op hul maandvergadering van 7 Desember 1999 besluit dat geen waarskuwingsbriewe in die toekoms aan laatbetalers of wanbetalers van dienste gestuur [sal] word nie.

The reference to the future (“toekoms”) necessitates the insertion of the word *sal*. The target text is grammatically improved by: “no warning notices would be sent”.

The formulation and syntax are not entirely correct according to the grammatical requirements of the target text. “During their monthly meeting on the 7th December 1999” should have read: “During their monthly meeting on 7 December 1999”.

- Appropriate use of words

The use of words is appropriate.

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Category 5: Presentation

- Suitable format

The layout is partly suited to the type of text. The heading in English only is insufficient. In a bilingual notice such as this one, each version should have its own heading.

- Spelling and punctuation

The Afrikaans notice fails to comply with spelling and punctuation requirements. A spelling mistake has been made: “rekeningstaat datum” instead of “rekeningstaatdatum”. The target text has a spelling or punctuation error: “Residents notice” instead of “Residents’ notice”.

4.2 Letter to municipality

4.2.1 Source text

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA - REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA	
Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology	
Departement van Kuns, Kultuur, Wetenskap en Tegnologie	
STATE ARCHIVES SERVICE / STAATSARGIEFDIENS	
TSHEBELETSO YA POLOKELO YA MANGOLO A MMUSO	
UPHIKO LWEZINCWADI ZIKAHULUMENI ZOMLANDO	
Navrae	Verw.
Enquiries: Mnr Wheeler	Ref R 10/3/4/2/12W
	Faks
	Privaatsak
Tel: (051) 5226762	Fax: (051) 5226765
	Private Bag X20504
	BLOEMFONTEIN 9300
Die Stadsklerk	
Munisipaliteit van Welkom	
Posbus 708	
WELKOM	
9460	
Meneer	
ELEKTRONIESE POS EN FAKSE	
1. Op 26 Junie 1998 het ek en dr Chadinha van u kantoor same-	
sprekings gevoer, waartydens hy die situasie met betrekking tot u	
elektroniese rekordstelsel en die gebruik van fakse uiteengesit het.	

Die gebruik van elektroniese rekords en fakse, moet ek net eers dadelik sê, is 'n algemene verskynsel deesdae en as sodanig is daar niks mee verkeerd nie. Wat wel kommerwekkend is en tydens die same-sprekings na vore gekom het, is die volgende vrae waarvoor antwoord gekry moet word:

(a) Hoe verkry u beheer oor die inligting wat na die verskillende e-pos-adresse van u kantoor toe gestuur word? Word alle inkomende inligting afgelaai en in die vorm van harde kopieë deurgegee na die sentrale registrasie toe vir liassering op die lêers van u goedgekeurde liasseerstelsel? Dieselfde geld vir inligting wat oor die internet versend word. Word harde kopieë daarvan gemaak en eweneens geliasseer? Hou in gedagte dat dit onreëlmatig sou wees, indien u e-pos selektief aflaa. In wese sou dit beteken dat u die Nasionale Argivaris as enigste outoriteit wat oor rekords mag beskik, ignoreer, maar belangriker is die versnipperingseffek wat so 'n praktyk op u rekords sal hê. Hiare sal onvermydelik ontstaan met die gepaardgaande onvermoë om 'n rekordbasis vir behoorlike aanspreeklikheid en deursigtigheid met betrekking tot die handeling van u kantoor daar te stel. Dit is in u eie belang en in die belang van die publiek dat u seker sal maak dat die daarstelling van 'n volledige publieke rekord nie deur die gebrek aan 'n behoorlike [*sic*] deurdagte elektroniese rekordstelsel in die wiele gery word nie.

Ten laaste moet ek met dr Chadinha saamstem dat dit gerade indien nie uiters noodsaaklik is nie, dat u die elektroniese rekordstelsel sentraliseer, sodat alle inkomende en uitgaande e-pos deur die registrasie afgelaai en geliasseer kan word.

(b) Die gebruik van faksmasjiene in verskillende kantore skeep klaarblyklik ook dieselfde vrae as wat hierbo gestel is en 'n stelsel sal uitgewerk moet word om te verseker dat alle inkomende en uitgaande fakse ook behoorlik geliasseer word.

2. Ek verneem so gou doenlik van stappe wat u gedoen het om die behoorlike liassering van e-pos en fakse te bewerkstellig.

3. U samewerking sal hoog op prys gestel word.

Die uwe

Wnde. HOOF: VRYSTAAT PROVINSIE

4.2.2 Target text

The Town Clerk
Municipality of Welkom
P.O. Box 708
Welkom
9460
Sir

ELECTRONIC MAIL AND FAXES

1. On 26 June 1998 Dr. Chadinha from your office and I held discussions during which he explained the situation with regard to your electronic record systems and the use of faxes. I must immediately state that the use of electronic records and faxes are a general occurrence nowadays and with that as such, there is nothing wrong. What is a matter of concern, though, and has come to light during the discussions, is the following questions to which answers must be found:

(a) How do you obtain control of the information being sent to the various e-mail addresses of your office? Is all incoming information downloaded and passed on in the form of hard copies to the central registration for filing on the files of your approved filing system? The same applies to information sent via the Internet. Are hard copies made thereof and are they filed in the same way? Bear in mind that it would be irregular to download e-mail selectively. By nature it would mean that you ignore the National Archivist as only authority that may dispose of records, but more important is the dispersion effect such a practice will have on your records. It is unavoidable that gaps will occur with the accompanying inability to establish a database for proper accountability and transparency with regard to the actions of your office. It is in your own interest as well as in the interest of the public that you ensure that the provision of a comprehensive public record not be thwarted by the lack of a well planned electronic record system.

Lastly, I have to agree with Dr. Chadinha that it is advisable, if not extremely necessary, that you centralise the electronic record system, in order that all incoming and outgoing e-mail be downloaded and filed by registration.

(b) The use of fax machines in various offices raises the same questions as above and a system will have to be planned to ensure that all incoming and outgoing faxes are also properly filed.

2. I will inquire as soon as possible about the steps you have taken to manage the proper filing of e-mail and faxes.

3. Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.

4.2.3 Assessment of source text

This letter is an example of a communication to the municipality whose translation is not to be issued to the public and is intended for internal use only. The requirements thus differ materially from those set for the previous one, which had to be flawless because it had to be open to public scrutiny. For the functioning of this text only the contents need to be communicated. Spelling and punctuation errors are of lesser importance. No translation brief was given and one may accept that the text merely requires translation into English because the town clerk prefers his correspondence to be conducted in that language. This text is a discursive one, concerning the importance of electronic mail and faxes.

4.2.4 Assessment of target text

Category 1: Textual aspects

- Coherence (meaningfulness) of text

The coherence of this text is sound. The addressee is immediately put in the picture with the reference to the conversation which took place in the office of the town clerk. The addressee is informed about the subject of the conversation as well as the date.

- Text function and translation brief

The function of the text is in accordance with the purpose of the translation brief, namely to discuss a specific problem and to persuade the recipient to embark on a particular course of conduct.

- Systemic features

This text may be categorised as discursive on the basis of certain systemic features. A discussion is taking place regarding the handling of electronic mail and faxes to the municipality of Welkom. In the discussion argumentative and rhetorical strategies are employed in the form of questions to the town clerk. Although no answers to these questions are expected, they are used to advance the issue and to emphasise the problems and the gravity of the matter.

The aim of the argumentative strategies is persuasion. The recipient of a discursive text cannot remain aloof because its sole purpose is to precipitate or enforce a decision one way or the other. An asym-

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metrical end is evident in that the argument is “won”. The recipient is compelled to change his or her conduct accordingly.

Inductive reasoning is followed in that the general situation is shown and then the specific situation within the particular city council.

Category 2: Content aspects

- Accuracy of information

The text complies with the requirements of accuracy.

- Adequacy of information

The information given in the text is adequate.

Category 3: Construction

- Logical construction

The text is logically constructed.

- Cohesion

The cohesion of the text is sound.

Category 4: Formulation

- Suitable language use

The language use is appropriate. Despite the fact that this text was translated for internal purposes only, its language should still be of a high standard.

- Degree of formality

The degree of formality of this text is a debatable point. The language used could conceivably have been more formal, given the content of the text. This is a formal letter, therefore the passive form of the verb might have been used. Furthermore, the use of the first person pronoun seems to pose a problem. Examples include the following:

Par 1: “On 26 June 1998 Dr Chadinha from your office and I held discussions” might have read: “On 26 June 1998 discussions were held with Dr Chadinha from your office”.

“I must immediately state that the use of electronic records and faxes are [*sic*] a general occurrence nowadays” instead of “The use of electronic records and faxes is a general occurrence nowadays”.

Par 2: “How do you obtain control of the information being sent to various e-mail addresses of your office?” instead of “How is control maintained over information being sent to the various e-mail addresses of your office?”

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- Formulation and syntax

The formulation and syntax invariably comply with the grammatical requirements of the target language, except for one glaring mistake:

Par 1: “What is a matter of concern, though, and has come to light during the discussions, is the following questions” should read “What is a matter of concern, though, and has come to light during the discussions, are the following questions”.

- Appropriate use of words

There are a few formulations which could have been improved but in view of the fact that this is a document intended for internal use only, these are of lesser importance, provided the meaning remains unaltered.

Category 5: Presentation

- Suitable format

The presentation of the text is not entirely suitable. There is no introductory sentence and the paragraphs are numbered. This is not acceptable in a letter.

- Spelling and punctuation

Spelling and punctuation are of lesser importance as this text is intended only to be used internally. For what is worth, the spelling and punctuation are in order.

4.3 Form

4.3.1 Source text

<p><u>DIE STAD WELKOM</u></p> <p>AANSOEK OM TOESTEMMING VIR DIE VERTOON VAN VERKIESINGSPLAKKATE</p> <p>(Afsonderlike vorms moet ten opsigte van elke kiesafdeling of wyk voltooi word)</p> <p><u>NAAM VAN AANSOEKER:</u></p> <p><u>POSADRES:</u></p> <p><u>VERMELD AARD VAN VERKIESING, PARLEMENTêR PROVINSIAAL OF MUNISIPAAL:</u></p> <p><u>IN DIE GEVAL VAN PARLEMENTêR OF PROVINSIAAL</u></p>
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Botha & Naudé/Quality of translations

IN THE CASE OF PARLIAMENTARY OR PROVINCIAL STATE NAME OF CONSTITUENCY:.....
.....

IN THE CASE OF MUNICIPAL, STATE NUMBER OF DISTRICT:

STATE NUMBER OF POSTERS TO BE DISPLAYED:

STATE NAMES OF STREETS WHERE POSTERS ARE TO BE DISPLAYED:

.....

I,

In my personal capacity / as representative of

.....

(a) Hereby state that I have completely familiarised myself with the instructions on the back of this document and, if my application is approved, I accept the said instructions as binding on me/ the institution I represent for the duration of the period during which the posters, hereby requested, are displayed.

(b) Herewith exempt and do not hold the City Council of Welkom responsible for the following:

(i) All losses, costs and damages incurred as well as any claims or actions against the City Council as a result of the display of the election posters hereby requested and approved.

(ii) All legal or other expenses incurred by the City Council investigation, defense or settlement of such claims.

Dated at this day of
in the presence of the undersigned witnesses.

WITNESSES:

1.

2.

.....
SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT
or his representative

4.3.3 Assessment of source text

This is an instructive text that should be immaculate so that it can withstand public scrutiny. The form should be comprehensible and lucid. No translation brief is provided, but the English translation could serve as a useful substitute. Information given in the text should be brief and to the point in order to evoke a response from the recipient. It goes without saying that the text should be translated in an equivalent manner. Once again it must be stressed that the source

and target texts should be absolutely faultless because both of them will find their way into the hands of the lay public.

In an overall assessment of the source text a few problems come to the fore. Enough information is given but the language use may be problematic. The register used is obsolete and may be unfamiliar. The construction and presentation of the text are logical, but its formulation is problematic. The language employed is outdated. The source text is brief and to the point because some sections have been omitted. This is not a problem as this is a form with a specific format. The text is authoritarian as a result of the formal use of language. The perlocutionary content of language is strong and is employed to evoke a particular reaction from the recipient.

The formulation of the instructions given in the source text could have been simpler: “Dui aantal plakkate aan wat u beoog om te vertoon” or “Vermeld aantal plakkate wat u gaan vertoon”, rather than the obsolete words used here: “Vermeld aantal plakkate wat vertoon staan te word” and “Vermeld name van strate waar plakkate vertoon staan te word”.

The layout and presentation are partly suited to the type of text. At some places not enough space is allowed for answers, especially where street names have to be supplied, as well as in the case of the date. There are a few spelling and punctuation errors: “Ek, in my persoonlik hoedanigheid” should have been “persoonlike hoedanigheid”.

A capital letter should be used at the beginning of the sentence: “(ii) alle...” should have been “(ii) Alle...”.

A hyphen is needed at the division of the last word at the end of the line in the last sentence: “GEDATEER te hierdie dag van in die teenwoordig heid... (teenwoordig-heid)”. A dotted line should be supplied for the information required in the above sentence.

The assessment of the target text will now be performed according to the categories of the quality assessment instrument.

4.3.4 Assessment of target text

Category 1: Textual aspects

- Coherence (meaningfulness) of text

The text is meaningful in the light of the context. The heading of the text immediately informs the reader what this form is all about.

- Text function and translation brief

The text function is in accordance with the aim of the translation brief, namely to guide the reader in the completion of the form.

- Systemic features

The systemic features are in accordance with the text function. The information on the form is given in such a way as to evoke a particular reaction from the recipient, who is instructed to act in a certain way. A highly specialised type of language is used.

Category 2: Content aspects

- Accuracy of information

The information is translated accurately in terms of the translation brief.

- Adequacy of information

The information given on the form is adequate.

Category 3: Construction

- Logical construction

The text is logically constructed.

- Cohesion

The text is presented cohesively.

Category 4: Formulation

- Suitable language use

The formulation is, in contrast to the source text, suitable and understandable. The text is concise, which is usually the case with instructive texts. In the light of the improvements in the language use/register and the fact that it is more understandable, this translation is a definite improvement on the source text. Credit for this is due to the translator.

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- Degree of formality

The degree of formality suits the content of the text.

- Formulation and syntax

The formulation and syntax of the target text are entirely in accordance with the grammatical requirements of the target language.

- Appropriate use of words

The use of words is appropriate.

Category 5: Presentation

- Suitable format

The presentation and layout of the target text leaves room for improvement. The format is too concise and insufficient space is allowed for answers to the questions. The appearance of the form is far from consumer-friendly. Not enough space is left between the various questions.

Secondly, the underlining of the sections in capital letters is not necessary, as such a double emphasis is excessive. In the heading "State type of election: parliamentary, provincial or municipal", the verb "State" could comfortably be left out, because the reader is asked in the next line to indicate the correct answer.

- Spelling and punctuation

The one and only punctuation error is the use of the capital letter with the statement "I, ...In my personal capacity ...".

5. Conclusion

The assessment instrument proves invaluable in pointing out the weaknesses not only of the source text but also of the target text. All the textual principles incorporated in the text, as well as the different levels of language, can be assessed, which makes the assessment comprehensive and complete. The instrument can also serve as a checklist for the writing of local government texts. This model makes the assessment of non-equivalent translations a reality. This being the case, the instrument can be used in the training of local government translators. The principles of TQM could also be applied to local government in order to establish a management system for the quality assurance of all texts and translations.

Botha & Naudé/Quality of translations

Table 2 below summarises the entire process of quality assessment, showing the interrelationship of translation theory (the translation brief), text principles, and quality assessment:

Standardisation	Categories of Assessment Model	Principles of Textuality
	Category 1: Textual aspects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance and appropriateness of text within context • Does the text function conform to the requirements of the translation brief? • Are the systemic features of the text type in accordance with the text function? 	(1) Coherence (2) Contextuality (3) Intertextuality (4) Intentionality (5) Acceptability
	Category 2: Content aspects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the information accurate with regard to the translation brief? • Is the information given adequate? 	(6) Informativeness
	Category 3: Construction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the text have a logical construction? • Is the text presented cohesively? 	(7) Cohesion
Pragmatic level	Category 4: Formulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the language use suitable, given the context? 	
Stylistic level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the degree of formality suit the content of the text? 	
Syntactic level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the formulation and syntax in accordance with the grammatical requirements of the target language? 	
Lexicological level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the use of words appropriate? 	
Graphic Level	Category 5: Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the format suitable? • Spelling and punctuation requirements 	

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