

ATA Framework for Standardized Error Marking

Explanation of Error Categories

Addition: (A): An **addition** error occurs when the translator introduces superfluous information or stylistic effects. Candidates should generally resist the tendency to insert “clarifying” material.

Explication is permissible. Explication is defined as “A translation procedure where the translator introduces precise semantic details into the target text for clarification or due to constraints imposed by the target language that were not expressed in the source text, but which are available from contextual knowledge or the situation described in the source text.” (Translation Terminology, p. 139)

Ambiguity: (AMB): An **ambiguity** error occurs when either the source or target text segment allows for more than one semantic interpretation, where its counterpart in the other language does not.

Capitalization: (C): A **capitalization** error occurs when the conventions of the target language concerning upper and lower case usage are not followed.

Cohesion: (COH): A **cohesion** error occurs when a text is hard to follow because of inconsistent use of terminology, misuse of pronouns, inappropriate conjunctions, or other structural errors. Cohesion is the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which provide formal links between various parts of a text. These links assist the reader in navigating within the text. Although cohesion is a feature of the text as a whole, graders will mark an error for the individual element that disrupts the cohesion.

Diacritical marks / Accents: (D): A **diacritical marks** error occurs when the target-language conventions of accents and diacritical marks are not followed. If incorrect or missing diacritical marks obscure meaning (sense), the error is more serious.

Faithfulness: (F): A **faithfulness** error occurs when the target text does not respect the meaning of the source text as much as possible. 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 or paragraph—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.

Faux ami: (FA): A **faux ami** error occurs when words of similar form but dissimilar meaning across the language pair are confused. *Faux amis*, also known as false friends, are words in two or more languages that probably are derived from similar roots and that have very similar or identical forms, but that have different meanings, at least in some contexts.

Grammar: (G): A **grammar** error occurs when a sentence in the translation violates the grammatical rules of the target language. Grammar errors include lack of agreement between subject and verb, incorrect verb tenses or verb forms, and incorrect declension of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives.

Illegibility: (ILL): An **illegibility** error occurs when graders cannot read what the candidate has written. It is the candidate’s responsibility to ensure that the graders can clearly discern 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.

Indecision: (IND): An **indecision** error occurs when the candidate gives more than one option for a given translation unit. 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.

Literalness: (L): A **literalness** error occurs when a translation that follows the source text word for word results in awkward, unidiomatic, or incorrect renditions.

Mistranslation: (MT): A **mistranslation** error occurs when the meaning of a segment of the original text is not conveyed properly in the target language. “Mistranslation” includes the more specific error categories described in separate entries. Mistranslations can also involve choice of prepositions, use of definite and indefinite articles, and choice of verb tense and mood.

Misunderstanding: (MU): A **misunderstanding** error occurs when the grader can see that the error arises from misreading a word, for example, or misinterpreting the syntax of a sentence.

Omission: (O): An **omission** error occurs when an element of information in the source text is left out of the target text. This covers not only textual information but also the author's intention (irony, outrage). Missing titles, headings, or sentences within a passage may be marked as one or more errors of omission, depending on how much is omitted.

Implication is permissible. Implication is defined as "A translation procedure intended to increase the economy of the target text and achieved by not explicitly rendering elements of information from the source text in the target text when they are evident from the context or the described situation and can be readily inferred by the speakers of the target language." (Translation Terminology, p. 145)

Punctuation: (P): A **punctuation** error occurs when the conventions of the target language regarding punctuation are not followed, including those governing the use of quotation marks, commas, semicolons, and colons. Incorrect or unclear paragraphing is also counted as a punctuation error.

Register: (R): A **register** error occurs when the language level or degree of formality produced in the target text is not appropriate for the target audience or medium specified in the Translation Instructions. Examples of register errors include using everyday words instead of medical terms in a text intended for a medical journal, translating a text intended to run as a newspaper editorial in legalese, using the familiar rather than the polite form of address, and using anachronistic or culturally inappropriate expressions.

Register is defined as "A property of discourse that takes into account the nature of relationships among speakers, their socio-cultural level, the subjects treated and the degree of formality and familiarity selected for a given utterance or text." (Translation Terminology, p. 172)

Spelling: (SP) (**Character** (CH) for non-alphabetic languages): A **spelling/character** error occurs when a word or character in the translation is spelled/used incorrectly according to target-language conventions. A spelling/character error that causes confusion about the intended meaning is more serious and may be classified as a different type of error using the Flowchart and Framework. If a word has alternate acceptable spellings, the candidate should be consistent throughout the passage.

Style: (ST): A **style** error occurs when the style of the translation is inappropriate for publication or professional use as specified by the Translation Instructions. For example, the style of an instructional text should correspond to the style typical of instructions in the target culture and language, or the temper of a persuasive essay may need to be toned down or amplified in order to achieve the desired effect in the target language.

Syntax: (SYN): A **syntax** error occurs when the arrangement of words or other elements of a sentence does not conform to the syntactic rules of the target language. Errors in this category include improper modification, lack of parallelism, and unnatural word order. If incorrect syntax changes or obscures the meaning, the error is more serious and may be classified as a different type of error using the Flowchart and Framework.

Terminology: (T): A **terminology** error occurs when a term specific to a special subject field is not used when the corresponding term is used in the source text. This type of error often involves terms used in various technical contexts. This also applies to legal and financial contexts where words often have very specific meanings. In more general texts, a terminology error can occur when the candidate has not selected the most appropriate word among several that have similar (but not identical) meanings.

Unfinished: (UNF): A substantially **unfinished** passage is not graded. Missing titles, headings, or sentences within a passage may be marked as one or more errors of omission, depending on how much is omitted.

Usage: (U): A **usage** error occurs when conventions of wording in the target language are not followed. Correct and idiomatic usage of the target language is expected.

Word form / Part of speech: (WF / PS): A **word form** error occurs when the root of the word is correct, but the form of the word is incorrect or nonexistent in the target language (e.g., "conspiration" instead of "conspiracy"). A **part of speech** error occurs when the grammatical form (adjective, adverb, verb, etc.) is incorrect (e.g., "conspire" instead of "conspiracy").