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Revising Translations
A Survey of Revision Policies in Danish Translation Companies

Kirsten Wølch Rasmussen and Anne Schjoldager
Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University, Denmark

ABSTRACT

The paper explains the theoretical background and findings of an empirical study of revision policies, using Denmark as a case in point. After an overview of important definitions, types and parameters, the paper explains the methods and data gathered from a questionnaire survey and an interview survey. Results clearly show that most translation companies regard both unilingual and comparative revisions as essential components of professional quality assurance. Data indicate that revision is rarely fully comparative, as the preferred procedure seems to be a unilingual revision followed by a more or less comparative rereading. Though questionnaire data seem to indicate that translation companies use linguistic correctness and presentation as the only revision parameters, interview data reveal that textual and communicative aspects are also considered. Generally speaking, revision is not carried out by specialised revisers, but by staff translators, who revise the work of colleagues and freelancers on an ad hoc basis. Corrections are mostly given in a peer-to-peer fashion, though the work of freelancers and inexperienced in-house translators is often revised in an authoritative (nonnegotiable) way. Most respondents and interviewees are worried about increasing pressures on the translation market, which, combined with customers' general lack of understanding of the translation process, mean that systematic, all-encompassing quality assurance is rarely financially viable.

KEYWORDS

Translation revision, translation quality assurance, procedures, revision guidelines, translation quality

1. Introduction

A review of the literature within translation studies soon shows that most studies that deal with the revision of professional translation focus on conceptual and/or didactic aspects, aiming to help translator trainers and practitioners to improve their work (e.g. House 1981; House 1997; Hönig 1997; Lauscher 2000; Mossop 2007b; Hansen 2008). Only very few studies deal with professional revision from an empirical perspective. We would now like to mention some empirical studies that have inspired our own research. Interested in the management side of professional translation, Petersen (1996) reports on a case study of Comtec Translations, which had recently achieved an ISO 9001 certification for their quality-management procedures, concluding that quality management is feasible in relation to professional translation. Other studies aim at an understanding of the nature of revision. Thus, for instance, drawing on writing process research in a think-aloud study of text-production processes in translation, Breedveld (2002) analyses self-

revision as a subprocess of translation. Based on interviews, Shih (2006) studies what professional translators say about their self-revision procedures. A main conclusion is that, on the contrary to expectations, translators claim to revise their translations only once or twice.

A few studies generate specific knowledge about the professional revision of translations: Brunette et al. (2005) compare the efficiency of unilingual revision with that of comparative revision and find that comparative revision renders the best results in terms of quality. (For an explanation of unilingual and comparative revisions, see section 2.1, below.) Künzli (2006) studies how a group of professional translators who are asked to revise technical translations deal with a terminological problem. Based on think-aloud protocols and a small corpus of revised translations, he concludes that revisers become "bogged down in terminological problems," fail to establish "effective intratextual links" and, generally speaking, fail to achieve a quality improvement in the translations (Künzli 2006: 208). Using a similar method, Künzli (2007) focuses on the changes made by a group of translators who revise the same draft translations, concluding that those who spent the most time revising produced the best results. Makoushina (2007) surveys the awareness of automated quality-assurance tools among translation and localisation companies and their evaluation of these tools and concludes that automated revision tools leave a lot of room for improvement. Robert (2008) explains some interesting findings in a small-scale survey of revision procedures in Belgian translation agencies. For an overview and a discussion of empirical research on the revision processes, including aspects of translators' self-revision, see Mossop (2007a).

In 2005, we were involved in an exploratory survey of professional revision practice (and that of précis-writing and editing) in Denmark and other European countries[1]. The results of this survey and others —notably the 2001 IAMLADP[2] report on professional training needs in Europe— provided documentation on the necessity of academic and professional training within the area, but we were left with a number of pertinent questions regarding professional revision policies and practices. In order to learn more about how and why professional revision is carried out, we have therefore initiated an empirical study using the translation profession in Denmark as a case in point.

This paper reports on our findings in a questionnaire survey involving 24 translation companies and an interview survey in five of these companies. Section 2 attempts to provide an overview of and discusses important definitions, types and parameters. Section 3 explains the methods and data of our questionnaire and interview surveys. Section 4 presents our findings, while section 5 concludes by listing our main results and making a few salient points.

2. Definitions, types and parameters

As already mentioned, our 2005 survey of professional revision practice (and that of précis-writing and editing) in Denmark and other European countries left us with a number of pertinent questions regarding the definitions and types of professional revision: though most respondents appeared to distinguish between the correction/improvement of original texts and that of translations, and some appeared to reserve editing for the former and revision for the latter, there was no consensus regarding terms and definitions (Schjoldager et al. 2008: 803). We shall now discuss and compare various definitions and types that are mentioned in the literature on professional revision (section 2.1) and we shall discuss some of the revision parameters that are mentioned (section 2.2).

2.1 Definitions and types

Our discussion of definitions and types of revision draws on two well-known textbooks that provide a conceptual framework for the analysis of professional revision: Mossop's (2007b) *Revising and Editing for Translators* and Horguelin and Brunette's (1998) *Pratique de la Révision*. Another important source is *Translation Services – Service Requirements*, a European standard that was published and approved in an English-language version as a Danish standard in 2006 (DS/EN 15038: 2006). The standard aims "to establish and define the requirements for provision of quality services by translation service providers" (DS/EN 15038: 2006: Introduction) and includes a whole section on terms and definitions (see also Arevalillo Doval 2005; Reuss 2007).

According to Mossop (2007b: 109), *revision* may be defined as "that function of professional translators in which they identify features of the draft translation that fall short of what is acceptable and make appropriate corrections and improvements". This definition seems to imply that revision is basically carried out by the translator him/herself. But, as pointed out by Shih (2006: 296), professional translation quality management means that revision is carried out by somebody else. Mossop (2007b: 167) therefore coins two terms in English that can help us distinguish between this and the revision that is carried out by the translator him/herself: self-revision and other-revision. *Self-revision* is carried out by a translator as an integral part of his/her translation process. This corresponds to Horguelin and Brunette's (1998: 4) *relecture* or *autorévision*. In the European standard, self-revision is referred to as *checking*: "On completion of the initial translation, the translator shall check his/her own work" (DS/EN 15038: 2006: 5.4.2). *Other-revision* is carried out by somebody else as a quality check on the translator's work. For the rest of this article, we shall not make this distinction but shall refer to other-revision simply as revision.

Within the translation profession, revision may have at least two functions (Mossop 2007b: 174): a business function and a training function. Revision with a *business function* is a means of "preparing the text for delivery to the client, and perhaps writing performance appraisals for the personnel department" (Mossop 2007b: 174). This kind of revision appears to correspond to Horguelin and Brunette's (1998: 4) *pragmatic revision*. In addition, customers may also carry out their own revision after delivery (Mossop 2007b: 119f). Horguelin and Brunette (1998: 4) refer to such revision by customers as *validation*. Revision with a *training function* is a means of "showing people where their strengths and weaknesses are" (Mossop 2007b: 174), helping translators improve the quality of their work. In translation companies, revision with a training function is mostly combined with regular business-function revision (Mossop 2007b: 177).

As far as the revision process is concerned, an important distinction is made between unilingual and comparative revisions (e.g. Mossop 2007a: 6). When carrying out a *unilingual* revision, a reviser concentrates on the target text as a text in its own right in order to detect unidiomatic and/or incorrect language as well as other textual errors and only checks with the source text occasionally (e.g. Mossop 2007b: 145). This procedure is comparable to what an editor does with other people's texts. When carrying out a *comparative* revision, which is sometimes referred to as bilingual revision (Brunette et al 2005), a reviser checks the translation for accuracy and completeness comparing it with the source text. Compared with unilingual revision, comparative revision is naturally more costly and time-consuming. However, as mentioned in section 1, Brunette et al. (2005) actually found that comparative revision may be more effective.

The European standard also distinguishes between unilingual and comparative revisions, referring to these as reviewing and revising, respectively, but its definitions in this respect are rather vague (Mossop 2007a: 6; Robert 2008: 2). *Reviewing* is defined as the examination of a target text "for its suitability for the agreed purpose and respect for the conventions of the domain to which it belongs" (DS/EN 15038: 2006: 2.8), while *revising* is defined as the examination of "a translation for its suitability for the agreed purpose," comparing the source and target texts (DS/EN 15038: 2006: 2.10). The main difference between the two kinds of revision seems to lie in the competences of the revisers. Whereas (comparative) revisers are supposed to be qualified translators themselves, (unilingual) reviewers "shall be domain specialists in the target language" (DS/EN 15038: 2006: 3.2.4).

According to Mossop, professional revision ought to comprise both unilingual and comparative revisions, giving priority to the former kind:

> […] all other things being equal, you should read the translation alone first, without comparing it to the source text. This is especially so when you are revising somebody else's work, because you have a golden opportunity to see the translation from the user's point of view (Mossop 2007b: 153).

Gile (1995) also gives priority to unilingual revision in his description of how a reviser typically proceeds:

> The revis[e]r starts the process with the target text, testing successive groups of Translation Units for editorial acceptability and fidelity, generally at the level of sentences and above. Ideally, he or she focuses on acceptability, on the assumption that the translator is conscientious enough to have checked thoroughly the fidelity of the text (Gile 1995: 111).

Interestingly, Horguelin and Brunette (1998: 39) prefer the exact opposite procedure and recommend that revisers start by reading the source text in comparison with the target text (see also Robert 2008: 13). In line with this, the European standard stipulates that, while comparative revision (revising) is compulsory (DS/EN 15038: 2006: 5.4.3), unilingual revision (reviewing) is subject to specifications: "If the service specifications include a review, the TSP [Translation Service Provider] shall ensure that the translation is reviewed" (DS/EN 15038: 2006: 5.4.4).

Most translators and translation scholars seem to agree that revision procedures can vary according to aim and circumstances (e.g. Mossop's 2007b: 140ff). A full revision, including both unilingual and comparative revisions, is a very time-consuming and costly procedure, and sometimes this may be regarded as impossible or unnecessary. A partial revision is perhaps called for when there is no time for a proper quality assurance or when the customer is not willing to pay for it; perhaps a full revision would be a waste of time and money because the translation is intended for informal use only, because the assignment is assessed as uncomplicated, or because the translator is highly qualified and experienced and not expected to make mistakes. Horguelin and Brunette (1998: 77) refer to translators that are so highly regarded that their work needs no revision as *traducteurs principaux* or *traducteurs autonomes*.

To know whether full, partial or no revision is required, some professional translators use a system of predefined selection criteria. Ling Koo and Kinds (2000) illustrate how Koo's company, a Netherlands-based translation and localisation service working mainly for the IT industry, applies a pre-established model based on the LISA Quality Model,[3] letting a classification of errors lead to different types of revision. Schütz (1999) describes a similar model based on quality metrics from the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). See also Prioux and Rochard (2007), who present a revision model used by the translation unit of the OECD with predefined criteria for the selection of translations that are given a full or partial revision.

To sum up, revision is the correction and/or amendment of a professional translation that is carried out by someone other than the translator before the translation is delivered to the customer. We shall assume that revision may be unilingual or comparative, that it may be full or partial, depending on aim and circumstances, and that it is carried out with a business function (possibly combined with a training function).

2.2 Parameters

This section discusses and compares various revision parameters that are mentioned in the literature. Quite a number of authors (Thaon and Horguelin 1980; Horguelin and Brunette 1998; Lee 2006; Mossop 2007b) propose parameters designed to help (student) revisers diagnose specific problem areas in a given translation. We find Mossop's (2007b) model of revision parameters particularly instructive and shall use this as a starting point.

Mossop's parameters are simply defined as "the things a reviser checks for" (Mossop 2007b: 124), meaning that revisers can use the listed parameters in a broad characterisation of the problem areas of a given translation. Table 1 presents Mossop's model in schematic form: the first column lists Mossop's four broad parameters (A-D); the middle column lists twelve specific parameters; and the final column paraphrases his explanations of the errors that revisers are supposed to look for (based on Mossop 2007b: 125ff).

Parameters	Specific parameters	Errors
A. Transfer	Accuracy	Does not mean what the source text means.
	Completeness	Deletes from the source-text message or adds to it.
B. Content	Logic	Does not make sense, e.g. is incoherent, contradictory or otherwise nonsensical.
	Facts	Is not true.
C. Language	Smoothness	Is not clear on first reading, e.g. is incohesive.
	Tailoring	Wrong choice of formality, technicality, tone, vocabulary.
	Sub-language	Wrong choice of words according to genre, field, etc.
	Idiom	Wrong word combination.
	Mechanics	Wrong spelling, punctuation, usage, house style, etc.
D. Presentation	Layout	Wrong margin, spacing, listing, etc.
	Typography	Wrong fonts.
	Organisation	Wrong pages, references, numbering, headings, etc.

Table 1: Mossop's model of revision parameters

Presumably, the entire list of parameters will be relevant for a full revision, whereas a partial revision will focus on selected parameters. Thus, for instance, Mossop's Transfer (A) may be disregarded in a unilingual revision, but given top priority in a comparative revision.

The lists in other publications (Thaon and Horguelin 1980; Horguelin and Brunette 1998; Lee 2006) comprise similar parameters to those of Mossop, but terms and degree of complexity differ somewhat. Thus, for instance, Mossop's Transfer (A) is sometimes referred to as accuracy (disregarding completeness), and his Language (C) is sometimes referred to as correct usage, transparency, tone, readability, functionality or similar terms. Furthermore, apart from Mossop, few authors single out Content (B) and Presentation (D) as parameters on their own. Horguelin and Brunette's (1998: 36f) model is an example of such a model. It comprises the following five parameters.

(1) Accuracy
(2) Correct Usage
(3) Readability
(4) Functional Adaptation
(5) Profitability

In Horguelin and Brunette's model, Accuracy corresponds quite closely to Mossop's (2007b) Transfer (A), while Correct Usage, Readability and Functional Adaptation may be subsumed under Mossop's Language (C). Profitability is a direct translation of *rentabilité*, their final parameter, prompting revisers to assess the viability of their task in order to know whether to continue revising or to recommend retranslation instead. The option of recommending retranslation instead of revision is also mentioned by the European standard (DS/EN 15038: 2006: 5.4.3).

3. Methods and data

As already mentioned, the aim of the research reported on in this paper is to investigate how professional revision is carried out, using the Danish translation profession as a case in point. For our purposes, *professional translation* is defined as translation carried out by people who translate for a living, whether translation is their main occupation or not, and whether they are qualified translators or not (see also Schjoldager 2008: 114). Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of professional translators: those who fulfil a service function in a private or public company (see Dam and Zethsen 2008, for instance) and those who operate directly on the translation market.

We shall concentrate on translators who operate directly on the translation market, distinguishing between freelancers and in-house translators. *Freelancers* are self-employed translators, who contract with

their own customers or with translation companies. *In-house translators* have permanent positions in translation companies. In-house translators may be further divided into owners, who work as translators for their own translation companies, and translator employees, who are salaried translators in these companies, but this distinction is not significant for our investigation.

Assuming that they represent a majority of professional translators in Denmark, we shall concentrate on the revision policies of Danish translation companies. Samuelsson-Brown (2004: 18) distinguishes between *translation companies*, which employ in-house translators *and* subcontract with freelancers, and *translation agencies*, which act as translation brokers and rely solely on freelancers. As will become apparent from table 3 (section 3.1), most participants in our investigation represent translation companies in Samuelsson-Brown's sense, whereas a few represent translation agencies, but, as this distinction is not significant for our purposes, we shall refer to both kinds as translation companies.

3.1 The questionnaire survey

We shall now explain how respondents were selected for the questionnaire survey in 2007, and we shall present the structure and contents of the online questionnaire.

We set up the following four criteria for the selection of potential respondents in Danish translation companies:

1. Assuming that revision is more likely in translation companies that have more than one employee, respondents were to represent companies that employ *at least two people*, exclusive of any freelancers, but including the respondent him/herself.

2. Respondents were to be *in charge of or, at least, knowledgeable of the revision policies*. We expected these to be owners, managers or other employees with equivalent responsibilities, but their relative status was not significant, as long as they had considerable insight into the revision policies of their companies.

3. Assuming that Danish translation companies are companies that operate from an *office situated in Denmark* (whether as independent companies or as subsidiaries of foreign groups) and offer *translations from and/or into Danish*, respondents were to represent companies that fulfil these two criteria.

4. Assuming that they would represent an essential part of the translation profession, respondents were to come from companies whose main

occupation lies within *specialised translation*, i.e. the translation of technical, legal, economic and other business texts for public and private companies. Though this limits the generalisability of our study, it enhances data comparability and makes our research directly relevant to the Danish MA programmes in specialised translation, in which the authors are involved.[4]

Respondents were found via a search in CD-DIRECT, a Danish database with information about all registered, private Danish companies (then a total of 425,000 companies). We accessed CD-DIRECT and found those companies that were registered as offering translation and interpreting (criterion 3) and as employing at least two people (criterion 1): this gave us a list of 86 companies. We then checked the websites of these companies and found that the main occupation of some of them was something other than specialised translation (criterion 4), mainly interpreting, subtitling and web localisation. This provided a list of 48 companies. In order to double-check their relevance for our investigation and to find suitable contacts (criterion 2), we then telephoned the companies on the list and found that some did not meet our criteria, mostly because their main occupation was not specialised translation or because they had fewer than two employees. This reduced our shortlist to 38 companies.

We chose the online format for our questionnaire hoping that it would help us gain access to a greater number of companies: because it is less time-consuming and more flexible, an online questionnaire is probably more acceptable to respondents than a traditional paper questionnaire. Our questionnaire was what Gillham (2000b) describes as semi-structured, containing both closed and open questions. For the closed questions, respondents were asked to choose between various options; for the open questions, respondents were asked to formulate their own answers. In addition, most questions were combined with open invitations to write additional comments. The semi-structured nature of the questionnaire obviously calls for a rather qualitative approach to the resulting data (see also Gillham 2000a). Consequently, though section 4 will cite some statistical information to support our questionnaire findings, the intention is *not* to render statistical facts, but simply to analyse and discuss respondents' answers and to suggest possible tendencies within the profession.

Having tested the technology and wording of the questionnaire in a small-scale pilot study, we finalised an online questionnaire that comprised 21 questions. Table 2 provides an overview of the structure of this questionnaire:

General topics	Questions
Respondents	1-2
Terminology	3
Revision policies	4-17
Current and future problems	18-20
Additional comments	21

Table 2: The questionnaire

The first two questions were meant to provide us with some background knowledge: question 1 concerns the respondents themselves—their professional backgrounds, job functions and contact details—and their companies, especially in terms of employees, whereas question 2 asks respondents to list the source and target languages offered by their companies. This was to help us ascertain whether translation from and into Danish played a major role in their companies, a prerequisite for their participation in the investigation.

In question 3, we first explain what we mean by revision—namely, following Mossop (2007b), the correction and amendment of other people's translations—and then ask respondents to state the preferred term for this in their companies. We found this question necessary in view of the terminological confusion that seems to persist within the translation profession (see section 2, above). Also, we wished to make sure that respondents would understand the topic of our survey. In addition, we hoped that respondents' answers would help us understand how revision is perceived by Danish translators.

Questions 4-17 were to elicit information about the revision policies of the respondents' companies in various ways. Thus, we asked them (overlapping) questions about their companies' checking procedures and their perception of translation quality. Essentially, these questions may be condensed into the following questions:

• Are all translations revised?
• If not all translations are revised, what are the selection criteria?
• Is revision comparative?
• Are revision guidelines established and what are the parameters?
• Who are the revisers and what is the status of the corrections?
• What is the underlying perception of translation quality?

Questions 18-20 ask respondents to comment on current and future problems that they envisage in connection with translation quality and quality assurance within the translation profession, and question 21

invites respondents to write any additional comments that they might like to make. We hoped that these final questions would elicit additional information that would help us understand the respondents' revision policies, and we hoped that respondents would welcome an opportunity to express their views on and concerns about the conditions of the translation profession.

3.2 The interview survey

We are well aware that the questionnaire method only allows us to study what respondents choose to tell us about their revision policies, not the policies themselves (Mossop 2007a: 5f). Hoping to get more in-depth insight into the actual revision policies within the Danish translation profession, we therefore decided to supplement the questionnaire survey with an interview survey of selected companies in 2009. Our main selection criterion was size in terms of in-house translators, as we simply chose those companies that employ most in-house translators. We expected larger companies to have given their revision policies more careful consideration than smaller companies, and that they would have more resources available for giving us their time.

We conducted a total of 13 interviews (table 4, below), which lasted between 18 and 64 minutes, with a 39 minutes' average. In each company, we conducted two kinds of interviews: respondent interviews and reviser interviews. In respondents' interviews, we interviewed those who had filled in the questionnaire, asking them to comment on and add to their answers. In revisers' interviews, we interviewed in-house employees who revise on a regular basis, asking them the same questions as those of the questionnaire, but asking them also to give their professional opinion on actual revision practices.

4. Findings

Attempting to provide an overview of our results, this section discusses findings in four subsections: 4.1 characterises respondents and interviewees, 4.2 discusses the issue of terminology, 4.3 provides an overview of respondents' and interviewees' revision policies, and 4.4 concludes the section by summing up respondents' and interviewees' additional points. Both questionnaires and interviews were conducted in Danish, but answers will be reported here in English.

4.1. Respondents and interviewees

In this section we shall report what we found out about respondents, interviewees and their companies. When reading through the questionnaire answers, we soon realised that five companies did not meet

our selection criteria after all (section 3.1, above): two companies specialise in subtitling, and three companies are managed by a company that was already represented in our data (though all four companies had separate entries in the CD-DIRECT database). Thus, having deleted these five names from our shortlist, we were left with 33 relevant respondents. Of these, 24 filled in the questionnaire, corresponding to a response rate of 73%. As already mentioned, we were only interested in translation companies that we knew to employ a minimum of two people. From respondents' answers, it soon became clear that these employees are not necessarily translators, but may also have other functions. When asked about the job titles of those who are not translators, several respondents mentioned project managers or proofreaders, and some mentioned translation analysts, language engineers and other software specialists.

We shall now look at respondents' companies in terms of their employment of freelance and in-house translators. As shown by table 3, respondents' answers vary greatly in degree of precision. Some give exact numbers, whereas others are much less precise (especially concerning freelancers). Two respondents (14 and 22) gave answers that are not comparable with those of the other respondents. The reason is that the companies of these two respondents are subsidiaries of foreign groups and that their numbers refer to the groups as a whole and not just the Danish subsidiaries. Their answers are marked by asterisks (*) in table 3:

N°	Freelance translators	In-house translators
1.	30	26
2.	1-2	3
3.	250	0
4.	250+	1
5.	a network	4
6.	3-4	1-2
7.	16	2
8.	?	1
9.	+/-10	7
10.	40	3
11.	200	25
12.	100+	40
13.	+/-200	0
14.	1000*	5*
15.	110	11
16.	60	8
17.	100	0
18.	5-600	7
19.	7	1
20.	+/-100	5
21.	10-20	3
22.	+/-12000*	+/-750*
23.	15-20	10
24.	50	0

Table 3: The employment structure of respondents' companies

Table 3 clearly shows that all companies tend to employ freelancers on a regular basis (even if one respondent simply answers "?" and another "a network") and that many of them do so in rather large numbers: 11 out of 22 respondents (disregarding respondents 14 and 22) mention that they employ 50 or more freelancers on a regular basis. Another clear trend seems to be that the number of in-house translators is rather low. Four respondents indicate that they employ no in-house translators, whereas 14 respondents say that they employ 10 or fewer in-house translators.

We asked respondents about the languages that their companies work with. Though many respondents indicated that—at least in principle—they translate from and into all languages, Danish and English were mentioned as the most important source and target languages, which is hardly surprising in a Danish context. Other important source languages were (in descending order): German, Swedish, French, Norwegian, Spanish and Italian; and other important target languages were (in descending order): German, Spanish, French, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Italian. The fact that respondents offer translations in a large number of languages and language combinations may be an important reason for the obviously extensive use of freelance translators: when they receive assignments outside the competence of in-house translators, they need to subcontract with other translators.

As already mentioned, the follow-up interviews were conducted in 2009 in five large translation companies selected from among those of our respondents who had reported comparatively high numbers of in-house translators (respondents 1, 11, 12, 15 and 18 in table 3, above). For reasons of confidentiality, we shall refrain from giving specific details about these companies.

As far as freelancers are concerned, all companies reported no changes since 2007, when they had participated in the questionnaire survey, and they all said that they cover the same languages as before. While one company reported that they employ more in-house translators than before, four companies reported that they have reduced in-house staff somewhat due to the ongoing global financial crisis.

Table 4, below, provides an overview of the interviewees as well as their reported job descriptions. As five interviewees are also respondents in the questionnaire survey, they are referred to as respondent interviewees. The remaining eight interviewees, referred to as reviser interviewees, were chosen because they revise other people's translations on a regular basis.

N°	Respondent interviewees	Reviser interviewees
1.	Administrator	
2.		Translator
3.		Translator
4.	Owner	
5.		Translator
6.		Translator
7.	Manager	
8.		Reviser
9.		Translator
10.	Translator	
11.		Reviser
12.	Administrator	
13.		Translator

Table 4: The interviewees

Three respondent interviewees (1, 7 and 12) reported that they are never involved in practical revision themselves, whereas two respondent interviewees (4 and 10) said that, in addition to their other duties, they are sometimes involved in practical revision. All reviser interviewees confirmed that they are regularly involved in revision, and two said that this occupies most of their working time (8 and 11), which is also reflected in their reported job descriptions.

4.2. Terminology

As already mentioned, because of the persistent terminological confusion within the translation profession, we asked the questionnaire respondents which term they used for the correction and/or amendment of other people's translations to make sure that they would understand the topic of the survey, and to help us understand how revision is perceived by Danish translators. All respondents answered this question. Nine said that they use *sprogrevision* (language revision). 15 replied that they preferred other terms. Most said that they used *korrekturlæsning* (proofreading). Alternative terms were also mentioned: *tjeklæsning* (check-reading), *kvalitetssikring* (quality assurance), *rettelse* (correction), *final check, rewrite, tandem translation* and *review*. (Though respondents answered our questions in Danish, the four latter terms were mentioned in English.) The interviews confirmed the preference for *sprogrevision* (language revision) and *korrekturlæsning* (proofreading), often used interchangeably.

In the following pages, disregarding which term is used by respondents or interviewees, we shall use the term revision to refer to the correction and/or amendment of other people's translations.

4.3. Revision policies

Respondents and interviewees were asked about their revision policies in various ways. This subsection is organised around their answers to the shortened list of questions mentioned in section 3.1, above.

4.3.1 Are all translations revised?

We asked questionnaire respondents to estimate the percentage of translations that are revised by their companies, specifying that we meant by somebody else than the translator him/herself and that this could be either with or without comparison with the source text. All 24 respondents answered this question. Table 5 gives an overview of their answers.
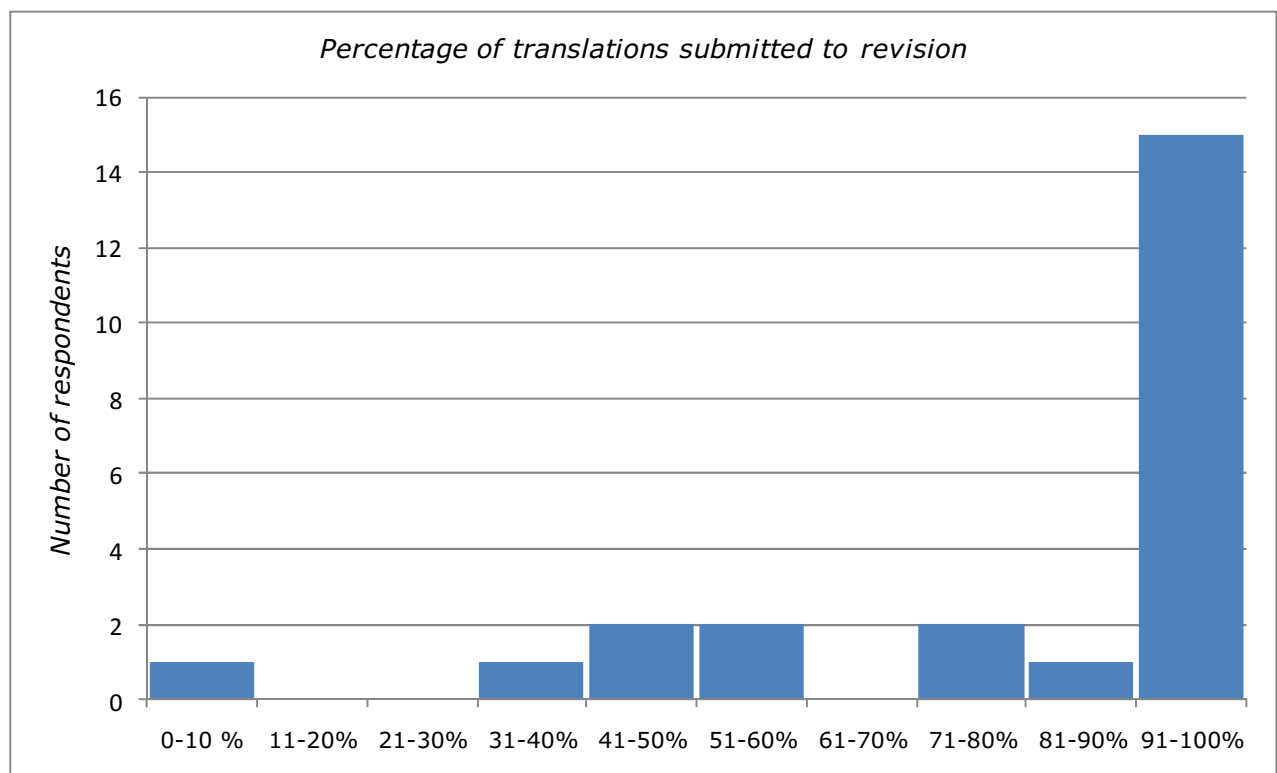

Table 5: Percentage of translations submitted to revision

As shown in table 5, the majority of respondents (15 out of 24) said that they submit between 91 and 100% of their translations to revision. Several respondents added comments to their percentages. Some indicated various reasons for not submitting all translations to revision. The most important reason was that there is not always time to revise everything. Another reason was that revision is not always necessary, for instance if a translation is subcontracted from another translation company, which is expected to carry out its own quality assurance. These answers confirm the reasons that are also mentioned in the literature (section 2.1).

We started each respondent's interview by asking them about the percentages that they had reported in the questionnaire survey. Three

had written that 90-100% of their translations were revised, whereas two had reported that they only revised 50% or less of their translations. These percentages were confirmed by all respondent interviewees.

We asked the three respondent interviewees who had reported percentages of 90-100% to explain how the percentages correlate with practice. As it turned out, the reported percentages are mainly true for in-house translations. Thus, one interviewee explained that, while all in-house translations are definitely revised, a few freelance translations may be sent on to customers without revision if there is no in-house expertise for this, or if it is decided to trust the quality assurance of the translator or (especially) his/her subcontracting translation company. Another interviewee clarified that in-house translators always check each other, whereas freelancers have so-called *tandem partners* (using an English term) who are expected to check each others' work. A third interviewee added that most of their business is based on in-house translations, which are revised as a general rule, whereas freelance translations are relatively rare and only revised (and assessed) initially.

The two respondent interviewees who had reported percentages of 50% or less both explained that they rely considerably on freelancers. The revision policy of one of these companies is quite similar to those of the above-mentioned companies in the interview survey: while in-house translations are checked on a regular basis, freelance translations are not always checked. The other company that had reported a percentage of less than 50% has the opposite policy: while in-house translations are only checked informally and when requested by the translator, freelance translations are checked on a regular basis by in-house revisers.

4.3.2 If not all translations are revised, what are the selection criteria?

We asked respondents who had indicated that not all translations were revised to tell us who decided whether a translation was submitted to revision or not. Most said that a project manager generally made the decision, but that translators themselves could also decide, as was also mentioned in 4.3.1, above. We asked both respondents and interviewees to tell us their criteria for selecting translations for revision. Their answers indicate that the following five factors influence the selection. We shall also summarise the explanations that were offered by respondents and interviewees.

Translator: The competence and experience of the translator in question seems to be an important criterion. Thus, for instance, a respondent, who had indicated that only 10% of their translations are revised, explained that most of the company's translators are highly skilled and therefore need no quality checks, whereas rigorous checking is absolutely necessary in connection with the work of other translators, especially young and

inexperienced colleagues. As was also apparent from some interviews (section 4.3.1), the policies regarding freelancers appear to vary somewhat within the translation profession: some companies are rather particular about the checking of freelance translators, wishing to promote and protect their own quality standards, whereas others tend to check freelancers only initially and in order to decide whether to trust them in the future.

Difficulty: According to some respondents, a translation is usually revised if the assignment is assessed as difficult because of specialised terminology, complexity of language or style, etc. More specifically, an interviewee mentioned that large assignments ("comprising many pages") are regarded as difficult, especially if several translators are involved, because consistency is difficult to maintain throughout. He also mentioned that assignments are sometimes seen as difficult if very few 100% matches are offered by Trados—perhaps because the customer and/or the subject area is new.

Text type/genre: It was often mentioned that translations of certain texts with particular and important functions are always submitted to revision. Marketing, medico-technical and legal texts were given as examples in both questionnaires and interviews.

Intended use: The intended use of the translation was also mentioned as a factor. A particular criterion seems to be whether a translation is intended for publication or not. As one respondent put it, translations that were to be published would always be double-checked. An interviewee mentioned that translations were always double-checked, as even minor mistakes could have serious consequences (in annual accounts, for instance), and another pointed out that translations that were likely to be read by a wide audience (marketing material, in particular) were more thoroughly checked than translations that were simply made as a matter of form (the translation of technical specifications demanded by the law, for instance).

Customer: Some respondents mentioned that translations for important customers were always submitted to revision, regardless of the above-mentioned criteria. This was confirmed by the interviews. In addition, we asked interviewees if customers were sometimes allowed to decide whether a translation should be revised or not. In three companies, the policy was clearly not to allow customers to decide this. As one interviewee pointed out, "all customers must pay for the same high standards." In another company, the interviewees admitted that in the past, they had sometimes offered a reduced price to customers who did not wish to pay for revision. Explaining that this was no longer the case, one interviewee said:

> Yes, we've tried this, but customers came back and complained about quality anyway. In the long run, you cannot save money or attract customers in this way. If you're a mechanic, you don't just change three wheels, and you tighten all the bolts.

Two companies in the interview survey seemed to allow customers a reduced price sometimes if they did not wish to pay for revision. As one interviewee said when asked about the cost of revision and the quality criteria applied: "I'm sure we sometimes have to be flexible in this respect too."

4.3.3 Is revision comparative?

We wished to find out whether revision tends to be comparative, i.e. if translations are checked against the source texts (2.1, above). Respondents were therefore asked to estimate which percentage of the translations were revised *with* a comparison with the source text. 22 respondents answered this question. Table 6 provides an overview of their answers.
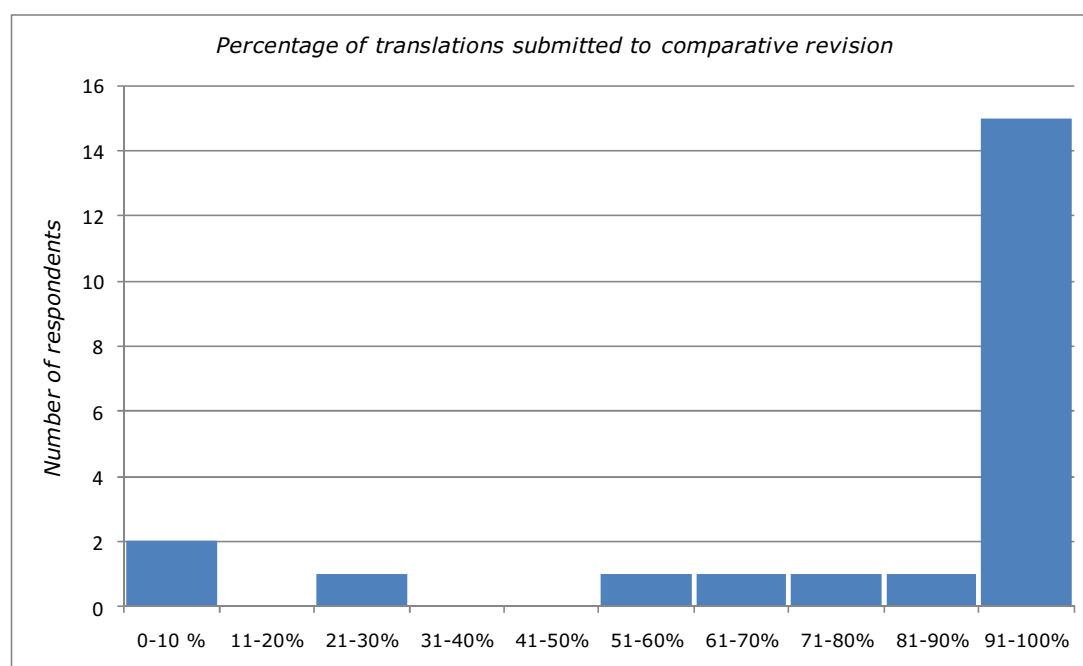

Table 6: Percentage of translations submitted to comparative revision

As shown in table 6, most respondents (15 out of 22) said that they submitted 91-100% of their translations to comparative revision. Few respondents commented on their percentages, but one said that they rarely submitted translations to comparative revision, because it was too costly: "We only use the source text if there is any doubt concerning content." Explaining that comparative revision costs twice as much as unilingual revision, one respondent said that they only checked against the source text if the target text did not make sense on its own. Another respondent made a similar point and added that whereas the translator

him/herself was expected to perform both types of revision, comparative revision by a colleague (a reviser) could be omitted if the assignment was urgent.

Based on the interviews, we came to understand that, in fact, revision is rarely completely comparative. Thus, the preferred procedure seems to be a unilingual revision followed by a more or less thorough comparative revision, a procedure that is quite similar to what is recommended by Mossop (2007b: 153) and Gile (1995: 111), as mentioned in 2.1, above. A reviser interviewee puts it like this:

> First I read the target text, and then I check with the source text – because I wish to check if the text sounds Danish or not and if it flows naturally. If I read the source text first, I would know what to expect. You should always start with the target text to see if you understand what it's all about. Afterwards I'll check with the source text, to see if everything is there and if the terminology is all right.

However, a few interviewees said that they preferred to do it the other way round, i.e. give priority to a comparative revision, which is recommended by Horguelin and Brunette (1998: 39) and (implicitly) by the European standard, as explained in 2.1, above. One interviewee, who specialises in financial and legal translation, is particularly disposed towards a comparative revision and explains:

> When I understand the source language, my revision is 100% comparative. Other colleagues do it differently, but I cannot help do a 100% comparative revision. Am I afraid that I cannot assess the target text properly? Not really. I always read through the target text with much care afterwards.

4.3.4 Are revision guidelines established and what are the parameters?

We asked respondents if they have specific guidelines for revision. 19 said that they do. Asked about the format of these guidelines, nine said that their guidelines are written; others listed a few specific parameters that they tend to use in the revision process. The respondents who mentioned that they had guidelines—whether they existed in writing or not—were then asked to describe these. Many did this, but in rather different ways. Some simply repeated that *all* translations had to be checked before delivery. Others were a little more specific. For instance, one respondent stated that all texts must comply with the rules of *Retskrivningsordbogen* (Dansk Sprognævn 2001), the official Danish spelling dictionary published by the Danish Language Council. Two respondents gave us more elaborate descriptions of their guidelines. Defining the aims and contents of non-comparative (unilingual) and comparative revision, one respondent sent us their revision guidelines, which are quoted in table 7.

Non-comparative revision:
The aim of the non-comparative revision is to ensure that the translation hangs together and makes sense. Content: The text is checked regarding cohesion (language) and coherence (content). Comparative revision is only carried out if errors of cohesion and coherence are detected.
Comparative revision:
The aim of the comparative revision is to ensure that the translated text is cohesive and makes sense and also to identify errors and misunderstandings and to improve the general quality of the language and the textual content. Content: Every aspect of the text is checked, i.e. cohesion (how the text hangs together), coherence (how the content hangs together), target group, content, consistency, style, grammar, etc.

Table 7: Respondent's revision guidelines

Another respondent gave us a list of reviser's parameters grouped according to four general parameters (Linguistic revision, Completeness, Client-specific revision and DTP[5]/layout revision), which are quoted in table 8. A comparison with Mossop's (2007b) framework is made in the final column (cf. section 2.2, above). This comparison is mostly quite straightforward, but sometimes it is not, which is marked by a stroke in the third column in table 8).

Respondent's parameters	**Respondent's specific parameters**	**Mossop's parameters**
Linguistic revision	Punctuation Misspelling (including typing errors) Grammar (including verb forms in headings and bullets) Misunderstandings of the message Consistency (terminology) Consistency of style (level of formality, tone) Figures and tables	C. Language C. Language C. Language C. Language/A. Transfer C. Language C. Language -
Completeness	Omissions Headers, footers and footnotes	A. Transfer -
Client-specific revision	Compliance with term lists Compliance with TMs/databases and other reference material Compliance with guidelines supplied by the client	C. Language C. Language C. Language
DTP/layout revision	Table of contents Updating of codes Subject indexing – cross referencing Tabulations	D. Presentation D. Presentation D. Presentation D. Presentation

Table 8: Another respondent's revision guidelines

Table 8 is interesting because it shows a set of practical guidelines used in the Danish translation profession. The most striking feature is that the respondent's guidelines do not mention what Mossop (2007b) refers to as Content (B). Other interesting features are that linguistic correctness dominates the respondent's guidelines and that client-specific considerations and technical aspects are given separate attention.

Based on the quotes in tables 7 and 8 and other answers to this part of our questionnaire, table 9 shows a list of specific parameters that were mentioned by our respondents. Sometimes respondents used different terms for similar parameters. These are grouped together. Thus, Accuracy, Misunderstanding and Misreading have been grouped together because they all mean that revisers have to check that source-text meaning has been transferred properly to the target text. A few parameters mentioned by respondents are so vague that they cannot be listed. The middle column in table 9 indicates how many respondents mentioned each parameter. As in table 8, the last column makes comparisons to Mossop's (2007b) parameters.

Respondents' specific parameters	N° of respondents who mentioned this	Mossop's parameters
Accuracy, Misunderstanding, Misreading	13	A. Transfer
Omissions	1	A. Transfer
Coherence	1	B. Content
Flow, Cohesion	6	C. Language
Adaptation of message to target readers, Localisation	7	C. Language
Tone of voice/style, Terminology, LSP	8	C. Language
conventions, Consistency	1	C. Language
Non-Danish constructions	21	C. Language
Grammar	15	C. Language
Spelling/typing	12	C. Language
Punctuation		
Layout	1	D. Presentation
Organisation	1	D. Presentation
Client requests	2	-

Table 9: Respondents' revision parameters

Table 9 clearly confirms the most striking feature of the respondent's guidelines in table 8, namely the preoccupation with linguistic correctness. Actually, to many respondents this seems to be the *only* parameter worth mentioning. Relatively few respondents mention parameters that may be compared to Mossop's Transfer (A). Just one mentions a parameter that can be compared to his Content (B), and only two parameters are comparable to his Presentation (D). In addition, two respondents (including the respondent quoted in table 7) mention that

the target text should be checked against client-specific requests, a parameter that is not emphasised by Mossop.

The interview survey confirmed the general absence of formalised revision guidelines. Only two companies that participated in this survey reported that they have written revision guidelines. In both companies, however, the lists are mainly used as a source of inspiration, not in any formalised way. In one company, the guidelines are rather similar to and based on the LISA Quality Model (cf. section 2.1, above); in the other, the guidelines are simply an internal document of do's and don'ts.

Three companies that participated in the interview survey reported that they do not have specific guidelines or even a checklist for the revision process. One interviewee was obviously surprised to be asked about this:

> Why would we need a checklist? It all depends on the text type and on the wishes of the customer. Customers sometimes give us sort of a style sheet, but we don't need our *own* checklist! It is something that undergraduate students need. The whole process is far too complicated. You just *know* what to do if you've studied translation at the business school. If you're in doubt, you ask your colleagues. Here we meet on a regular basis, discussing issues of spelling and terminology.

In another company, the interviewees explained that the broad framework of the European standard functions as revision guidelines for their company. In a third company, interviewees explained that, though they do not have any written guidelines as such, a reviser was in the process of drawing up a reviser's checklist to be used by herself and her colleagues.

The interview survey did not confirm our finding in the questionnaire survey that formal (linguistic) correctness is the *only* revision parameter in many translation companies. As explained by all interviewees, though the elimination of formal errors always takes first priority, textual and communicative aspects are *also* important. However, as pointed out by several interviewees, this may be truer in theory than in practice. On a tight schedule, revisers do not always have time for making textual and communicative corrections, which are more time-consuming than formal corrections. A few even admitted that—if pressed for time—they only check punctuation, spelling and terminology, because these are the features that most customers can appreciate. Others pointed out that checking textual and communicative aspects is the translator's responsibility more than the reviser's. Thus, for instance, one interviewee, who spends most of her time revising, explained that if she saw something that was grammatically correct but did not fit the context or simply "looked strange," she preferred not to suggest a correction but wrote a comment for the translator to decide what to do.

Interestingly, some interviewees' responses regarding the textual and communicative aspects of translation correspond quite closely to Mossop's (2007b) revision parameters of Smoothness and Tailoring (see section 2.2, above). Thus, for instance, many interviewees mentioned that revisers gave translations a textual "facelift" or a communicative "overhaul." One interviewee clearly saw it as his responsibility to improve the readability of the translation: while professional translators rarely make mistakes of spelling, punctuation, grammar and terminology, they are sometimes "too immersed in detail" to produce good, functional texts. According to him, revisers are in a better position than translators to spot if a text does not fulfil its purpose, which was also mentioned by other interviewees.

In general, interviewees mentioned textual and communicative aspects of their work more often than questionnaire respondents did. This is probably because interviewees were prompted by us to discuss such aspects, whereas respondents were only asked open questions. Perhaps revisers need prompting to discuss textual and communicative aspects because, as mentioned above, they tend to give priority to the correction of formal mistakes and are more used to and more skilled at discussing these. At least, as we see it, many revisers seem to lack a conceptual framework for defining textual and communicative aspects.

4.3.5. Who are the revisers and what is the status of the corrections?

We asked respondents to indicate who their revisers are. 21 answered that revision was carried out by other translators, but a few mentioned that it can also be carried out by people with other job functions—such as proofreaders and project managers. Only three respondents indicated that revision was always carried out by proofreaders or editors. Other respondents simply pointed out that revisers are in-house employees. Unprompted, several respondents emphasised that revisers should be senior translators, native speakers of the target language or subject-specific experts. Apart from this, specific qualifications for revisers were not mentioned, contradicting one result of our 2005 questionnaire survey that documented a perceived need for the specialised training of revisers (Schjoldager et al. 2008).

The questionnaire results regarding revisers' qualifications as translators were confirmed by the interviews. One interviewee pointed out the benefits of a system of translators-revisers:

> Personally I think that translators should also revise other people's translations from time to time, and I think that revisers should translate themselves sometimes. It does not have to be much, but they should do it. Revisers learn how other people tackle translation problems, both linguistically and terminologically. This can be very inspiring. You learn some good tricks. Revision can also function as professional sparring. It will make you understand better the translation

process. Full-time revisers sometimes forget what translation is like. Translating themselves will improve the feedback that they can give to translators.

While agreeing that revisers should be qualified translators themselves, another interviewee, who spends most of her time revising, added that revision experience was actually a qualification in itself:

> I think that full-time revisers have a better chance of developing the necessary skills. For instance, if you revise a lot, you'll know better how to spot certain mistakes and you'll be more efficient correcting them.

When asked if revisers were given some revision training, all interviewees answered that their companies offered no formal training, but informal guidance was sometimes given by a more experienced colleague.

We asked our questionnaire respondents about the status of the revisers' corrections. First we asked them to characterise their revisers' corrections, suggesting three answer possibilities: "authoritative" "peer-to-peer" (helpful and negotiable) or "other" corrections. 23 respondents filled in this part of the questionnaire. 17 said that they use peer-to-peer corrections. Eight of these said that they also use authoritative corrections. Thus, for instance, if the translator in question is inexperienced or unknown to the company (new freelancers, especially), the reviser has the final say. Only five said that revisers' corrections are always authoritative. One respondent said that they use all three kinds of corrections. When asked to exemplify the "other kinds" of corrections, s/he mentioned corrections in connection with terminological issues that could only be resolved in consultation with the customer, meaning perhaps that such corrections are neither the reviser's nor the translator's responsibility.

The interviews clearly showed that the status of revisers' corrections is largely dependent on the translators in question: experienced colleagues are mostly given suggested (peer-to-peer) corrections, whereas inexperienced colleagues and freelancers are given more authoritative corrections. Two companies in the interview survey rely mainly on in-house translators, who are mostly revised in a peer-to-peer fashion. One interviewee, who spends most of her time revising, explained why she prefers to revise in a peer-to-peer fashion:

> Normally I use comments or questions rather than specific corrections. This is because sometimes I'm not quite sure that something is really wrong. The translator may have good reasons for choosing as he or she does. You know that the translator has spent a lot of time on the assignment, and you don't know the text as well as he or she does. So, what I do is draw attention to something that might be wrong. I write for instance, 'have you checked this'?

A third company relies on many freelancers, whose work is checked systematically in an authoritative way. A fourth company relies both on

in-house translators, who are revised in a peer-to-peer fashion, and freelancers, who, if they are revised, are revised in an authoritative way. The fifth company relies on what they refer to as tandem translation (explained in 4.3.2), in which case the status of the corrections is a matter between the collaborating freelancers (tandem partners).

We asked questionnaire respondents to tell us who was responsible for finalising translations after the revision process, suggesting three answer possibilities: "the translator him/herself," "other translators" and "others." 24 respondents answered this question. Half of these (12) said that the responsibility lies with the translators themselves. Seven said that translators share the responsibility with others, and five ticked "others," indicating that translations tend to be finalised by project managers, revisers or other in-house employees. These results were clarified by the interviews. According to the interviewees, in connection with peer-to-peer revision (mostly between in-house colleagues), the responsibility for finalising the translation generally lies with the translator, whereas, in connection with authoritative corrections (mostly of freelance translations), the responsibility for finalising the translation lies with an in-house reviser.

Finally, we asked questionnaire respondents to tell us if, when and why the reviser offered feedback to the translator. Most respondents said that feedback was generally given to junior in-house translators and new freelancers, and that it could be given if revisers wished to explain their corrections or if a translator requested such explanations. When asked about the aim of their feedback to translators, interviewees confirmed our interpretation of the questionnaires: feedback was given with a view to helping translators learn from their mistakes and help them avoid similar mistakes in the future, i.e. revision with a training function (see section 2.1, above).

4.3.6. What is the underlying perception of translation quality?

To complement our specific questions about revision procedures, we asked respondents to give us short descriptions of their perception of translation quality. We received 22 replies to this question. Most (16) respondents viewed quality as a property of the translation product, stating that it was achieved if there was an absence of errors. Respondents seemed rather unanimous in applying similar quality criteria to all translations irrespective of genre and situation by simply defining translation quality in terms of "correctness:" correct language, correct terminology, correct style and correct message. However, a few respondents also mentioned that quality criteria may differ according to circumstances. Thus, two respondents mentioned that quality may sometimes depend on what customers need, and one stated that, in addition to being "fluent, varied and idiomatic", which is expected of all

translations, legal and technical translations should be "precise, 100% terminologically correct and stylistically appropriate", and creative texts should be "suitably adapted to their target receivers."

Interviewees confirmed that quality is seen primarily as an absence of errors and that quality criteria may vary according to situation and customer needs. In addition, many pointed out that customers and translators do not always agree on quality criteria. To most customers, quality is a function of speed, price and formal correctness: if a translation is delivered on time, at a reasonable price and looks trustworthy, they are satisfied. Though interviewees also regard these factors as a prerequisite for translation quality and though they recognise the necessity of focussing on what customers want, their own perception of quality also takes textual and communicative aspects into account (see also section 4.3.4, above).

4.4 Problems and additional comments

Respondents and interviewees were asked which problems they experienced or anticipated, relating to translation quality and quality assurance within the translation profession. They were also asked if they had other points that they would like to share with us. This section summarises their comments.

Many said that it was becoming increasingly difficult to uphold proper quality standards due to increasing pressures on delivery deadlines and prices. Some attributed this problem to unfair competition from an increasing number of translation companies that used unqualified and untrained translators and entered the market by lowering prices and delivering doubtful quality. They mentioned that the advent of the internet with its easy access to information made competition on the translation market everywhere even fiercer. Several also mentioned that quality assurance was sometimes impossible due to the great variety of working languages that they had to offer: if they did not have the necessary in-house competences in all of these languages, they had to outsource translations to freelancers, whose work could not be checked properly by in-house revisers.

Many pointed out that a basic problem lies with customers who lack a proper understanding of the translation process and therefore tend to take quality for granted and focus too much on quick delivery and low costs. One respondent said that, generally speaking, most customers see translation as a kind of "standard commodity." Another respondent stated:

> Customers forget far too often that they need a translation until just before they need it, and this is why we are too pressed for time. Also, they think that they themselves are able to translate into English, for instance, and do not understand

that a translation needs thorough revision. Generally speaking, customers lack a proper understanding of the art of translation.

However, while recognising that customers generally lack proper understanding of translation as a professional skill, some also feel that this problem could and should be solved. Thus, for instance, some emphasised that they would not accept customers who are not willing to wait for proper quality assurance. One respondent said that they were not in the discount business and that if customers were not willing to pay for quality they should go elsewhere. Another said that they "trained" customers to understand how translation quality was achieved: "A good translation requires collaboration with and input from the customer."

Judging from the answers that we received, many are also worried about the translators themselves. In particular, some pointed out that many still lacked sufficient IT skills and that they failed to keep abreast with technological advances both within the translation industry and in customers' companies. One respondent mentioned that translators would need more specialised knowledge of languages. Another argued that the existing MA programmes in specialised translation in Denmark (see section 3.1, above) did not prepare language graduates well enough for the translation market, suggesting that a period of supervised on-the-job training would be required before graduates can become competent translators. Similarly, it was suggested that graduates should only receive state authorisation as translators[6] after a three-year period of relevant work experience.

An additional point concerns the recent European standard, *Translation Services—Service Requirements* (DS/EN 15038: 2006; see section 2.1). We had expected questionnaire respondents to mention this on their own initiative, but none of them did. We therefore asked interviewees what they thought about this standard and if they planned to be certified (as we knew that they were not). While appreciating that the standard is a step in the right direction, several interviewees criticised it for being too general, too vague, too wordy and too incomprehensible to be really useful. All interviewees said that, at least for the time being, they would not apply for certification, because it would be a waste of time and money. One interviewee explained that their customers were sufficiently satisfied to know that the recommendations of the standard were followed (which is also mentioned on the company website). Pointing out that the standard can only regulate quality assurance and not quality itself, another said:

> Yes, we know this standard, but it isn't worth much. Even if the standard says that two people should collaborate on an assignment, this doesn't mean anything, because these two people may be poorly matched or they may both be unsuitable. We aren't sure that it'll be worth the cost and our time to apply for certification.

Well, one day it may be necessary for us in connection with a public contract. We shall see.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the background and results of an empirical study of revision policies in the Danish translation profession. Both questionnaire and interview data clearly show that Danish companies whose main occupation lies within specialised translation regard both unilingual and comparative revisions as essential components in professional quality assurance. However, due in particular to increasing pressures on the translation market and to customers' lack of understanding of the translation process (4.4), many also concede that systematic and thorough quality assurance is rarely achievable. The main conclusions concerning revision policies in the Danish translation profession are summarised below:

- Not all translations are revised (4.3.1). Most companies seem to concentrate on revising in-house translations, though a few companies appear to concentrate on revising translations that they outsource to freelancers.

- The decision whether to revise or not is influenced by five factors: translator, difficulty, text type/genre, intended use and customer (4.3.2).

- Most revisions seem to be comparative (4.3.3). In the interview survey, we learnt that this does not necessarily mean that all parts of the target text are always checked against the source text. Though preferences may vary according to genres and circumstances, the preferred procedure seems to be that the target text is first checked on its own and that a comparison with the source text is only carried out where it is deemed necessary or relevant. We also found that some revisers prefer to do it the other way round, i.e. starting with a full comparative revision followed by a unilingual revision.

- Few companies have formalised guidelines and tend to use presentation and linguistic correctness as revision parameters (4.3.4). In the interview survey, we found that this does not (necessarily) mean that revisers (and translators) are unaware of textual and communicative aspects.

- Most revisers are qualified translators, who spend much of their time translating and who tend to revise in a peer-to-peer fashion (at least as far as their in-house colleagues are concerned), while a few are specialised revisers, who spend most of their time revising and who

revise colleagues and (mainly) freelancers' work in an authoritative (nonnegotiable) way (4.3.5).

- Translation quality is mostly regarded as a matter of formal correctness, though textual and communicative aspects are also mentioned by the interviewees (4.3.6).

We are well aware that these findings are solely based on what respondents wrote and interviewees said in response to our questions and not on actual policies, which we can only guess about; and we are aware that the numbers given by respondents and interviewees are likely to be estimates, not statistical facts. However, with these reservations, we would like to suggest that we have contributed to knowledge that will prove useful and necessary for translation theory and translator training and perhaps also for the profession itself.

From a theoretical perspective, we hope that our research will promote the understanding of professional translation within the academic field of translation studies, possibly leading to an adaptation of current theories within the sociology of translation (e.g. Chesterman 2006; 2009). Thus, our results seem to indicate that Mossop's (2007b) revision parameters describe what many professional revisers take into consideration when they revise (4.3.4).

Our research may contribute effectively to translator training by providing specific knowledge on the translation market, professional translators and their working procedures. We shall use this knowledge to ensure that our MA programmes in specialised translation stay relevant for students' future careers (see also Malmkjær 1994; Schjoldager 2009; Hostench 2010).

Finally, we hope that our research may be useful for the translation profession itself by giving translation companies an overview of current policies and perhaps inspiring them to reconsider and develop their own. At least, in the course of this investigation, we were pleased to find that most respondents and interviewees readily saw the usefulness of our research and that they were obviously curious about what we were finding out about their profession as a whole.

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Biography

Kirsten Wølch Rasmussen is an Associate Professor in French at the Aarhus School of Business (ASB), Aarhus University. She is Director of Study for the MA programmes in language and business communication at the ASB and is a member of the Danish Translators' Commission. Her academic interests include profession-oriented translation research and translator training and she has participated in several EU projects on legal interpreting and translation. She has an MA in French for specialised purposes.

kwr@asb.dk.

Anne Schjoldager is an Associate Professor in English at the Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University. A founding member of the ASB research group for translation and interpreting (www.asb.dk/translation), her academic interests include profession-oriented translation research, professional ethics and translator training. She has an MA in English for specialised purposes and wrote her PhD on translational norms in simultaneous interpreting. Recent publications include *Understanding Translation*, a textbook for theoretical and practical courses in translation and interpreting.

asc@asb.dk.

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[1] This exploratory survey was carried out in connection with our development of a module on précis-writing, editing and revision at the Aarhus School of Business (ASB) in 2005. The module was piloted and intended for the European Master in Translation, which was then a joint European master's programme (Schjoldager et al. 2008). Due to an unfortunate lack of harmonisation in European legislation that proved an unexpected hindrance, this programme was discontinued in 2006 (see also Lauridsen and Zethsen 2007). The ASB is now one of 34 members of a related, but different kind of project, namely the European Master's in Translation (EMT) network, which was established in 2009 on the initiative of the European Commission for higher-education institutions offering translator training.

[2] IAMLADP stands for Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications. According to its website, its overall objective is to enhance "the efficiency, quality and cost-effectiveness of conference, language and publishing services in international organizations" (IAMLADP website). IAMLADP participants include United Nations managers of conference services, representatives of European institutions, other intergovernmental organisations and some academic institutions involved in the training of translators and interpreters.

[3] LISA stands for the Localisation Industry Standards Association. The LISA quality model was developed by a Special Interest Group and first published in 1995.

[4] The Danish MA programmes in specialised languages are offered by the Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University, and the Copenhagen Business School. Based on an MA degree in specialised languages (*cand.ling.merc.*) with a specialisation in translation and interpreting, a graduate can achieve state authorisation as translator and interpreter (*beskikkelse som translatør og tolk*). State authorisation is granted by the Danish Commerce and Companies Agency (*Erhvervs- og Selskabsstyrelsen*). For further information and a historical overview, see Koue (2008).

[5] DTP (desktop publishing) is "the design and production of publications by means of specialized software enabling a microcomputer to generate typeset-quality text and graphics" (Dictionary.com Unabridged, consulted 29.05.2009).

[6] As explained in note iv, state authorisation is achieved based on an MA degree in specialised languages with a specialisation in translation and interpreting.