Bern University
of Applied Sciences

Checklist for the Machine Translation Use in University Contexts Policy

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Bilingualism & Multilingualism Office

From assessing a text through to post-editing and publishing

1. Check if a text is suitable for MT use

- For temporary and/or low-risk internal communication, go to steps 2 and 3
- For permanent and/or high-risk external communication, go to step 4.

2. Pre-edit the text

- Delete any identifying features (name, etc.) to ensure privacy
- Do not put confidential information / trade secrets / research data into MT
- Correct any errors of spelling and grammar
- Fill in any missing punctuation, missing grammatical subjects and/or objects
- Write out proper nouns as they should appear in the target language, use as few pronouns as possible, and avoid idioms and uncommon abbreviations
- Break up longer sentences, use complete sentences and avoid the passive voice

3. Post-edit the text (if you have sufficient knowledge of the target language)

- Read the MT output and evaluate whether a reformulation of the target language content is necessary to ensure comprehensibility
- Use the source language content as a reference in order to understand and, if necessary, correct the target language content
- Produce target language content either from existing elements in the MT output or provide a new translation
- Check that the source and target language content correspond, that there are no mistakes, and that no information has been accidentally added or omitted
- Common mistakes include:
  - Missing words and/or content
  - Incorrect word choice due to lack of context (e.g. in the case of words with more than one meaning), improper register or incorrect terminology
  - MT output being too close to the source text structure, rendering it incomprehensible or unidiomatic
  - Lack of regional or cultural adaptation for the target language audience
  - Errors resulting from sentence-by-sentence translation (e.g. inconsistent terminology, lack of coherence with the text as a whole, such as unclear references)
  - Non-existing words
  - Incorrect punctuation
  - Check that the target language content is suitable for the target audience and for the purpose of the text
  - Ensure that the target language content conforms to your university's terminology database (provide link) and, if available, corporate wording guidelines

4. Working with a professional translator

- Provide the professional translator with the source text
- Do not provide them with MT output unless you explicitly indicate it as MT output
- Consult with the professional translator as to whether the text is suitable for post-editing or translation
- If the former, work with the professional translator to decide what degree of quality is required for the final MT output (i.e. light post-editing or full post-editing)

Useful resources

- Project on MT Literacy in university contexts
- Guidelines on machine translation for academic texts (in German only)
- Kenny, Dorothy. 2022 Machine translation for everyone: Empowering users in the age of artificial intelligence (nur auf Englisch).