

EDITING OF MACHINE TRANSLATION

Read and check your understanding.

When a computer rather than a human performs an initial translation, editing and proofreading are crucial for revising and improving the text. Machine translation engines like Google and Bing are much better than they used to be, but they still produce inaccurate or confusing phrases, so an expert (who is often a translator trained in editing techniques) needs to edit the text to remove errors and correct word choice. This specific type of translation editing and proofreading is called machine translation post-editing, and it focuses on errors unique to machine-generated results.

Proofreaders work with almost-finalized drafts and cover the following topics:

major grammar mistakes

spelling and punctuation

word choice inconsistencies

typos and cut-and-paste errors

formatting problems

Handy tips:

1) Get rid of words that do not contribute to the meaning of a sentence, or words that over-complicate the structure.

Good example: He works on marketing projects.

Bad example: He is the man who works on marketing projects.

2) Keep your sentences short, with a simple grammatical structure. Where possible, break long sentences into two shorter ones

3) Avoid ambiguity, use the active voice

The active voice is a style of writing that cuts out vagueness and ambiguity. Again, if a human is unsure on the exact meaning of a phrase, then a machine translation engine is going to struggle, especially if your sentence has a double meaning.

Good example: I will always remember my first time using a machine translation engine.

Bad example: My first time using a machine translation engine will always be remembered.

4) Use the definite article, even when you don't want to

Try to specify nouns using "the", as a machine translation engine can struggle to distinguish between verbs and nouns. A lot of short nouns can also be verbs, for example 'skip', 'bank', 'lodge' – these can cause further confusion if used without a definite article. Instructions and user manuals often omit the definite article.

Good example: Build the engine. Train the engine. Use the engine.

Bad example: Build engine. Train engine. Use engine.

5) Avoid idioms/clichés/slang/colloquialisms/abbreviations

A machine translation engine may not convey the correct meaning of colloquial or idiomatic phrases and the meaning may not make sense to international users.

Good example: She didn't come into the office as she was not feeling well.

Bad example: She didn't come into the office as she was under the weather.

5) Avoid the preposition – of more than three times within a sentence. Instead, -of phrases convert into multicomponent terms.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Which of the following is NOT a common error in machine translation?

- a) Missing words
- b) Incorrect verb tense
- c) Inconsistent terminology
- d) Perfect grammar and syntax

2. True or False: Machine translation is always 100% accurate.

- a) True
- b) False

3. Which of the following is a good strategy for proofreading machine translation?

- a) Reading the translation out loud
- b) Comparing the translation to the original text
- c) Using a spell-checker
- d) All of the above

4. Which of the following is NOT a benefit of machine translation?

- a) Speed
- b) Cost-effectiveness
- c) Accuracy
- d) Personalization

5. True or False: Machine translation is a replacement for human translators.

- a) True
- b) False