



ISO 5060:2024 – An Essential Tool for Objective Translation Quality Evaluation

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In the ever-evolving landscape of language services, ensuring quality and consistency in translation output is crucial. For translation service providers (TSPs) and their clients, [ISO 5060:2024 Translation services – Evaluation of translation output – General guidance](#) offers a structured, adaptable approach to translation quality evaluation. As Dr. Christopher Kurz highlighted in EUATC ISO TC 35/SC 5 webinar in October 2024, the flexibility of ISO 5060 supports human decision-making in translation evaluation, emphasizing adaptable quality measures over rigid requirements—a valuable approach for TSPs and clients alike. Here, we dive into what makes ISO 5060 a valuable asset for anyone involved in the evaluation of translations.

Developed with Diverse Global Expertise

ISO 5060 was developed over four years, with participants from over 30 countries including TSPs, freelancers, industry associations, and institutions like the European Commission and the European Parliament. This inclusive approach has resulted in a well-rounded standard that addresses the needs of a wide range of stakeholders in the language services industry. This broad perspective makes ISO 5060 applicable across various sectors, from legal and medical to gaming and technical fields, each requiring unique criteria for translation evaluation.

Scope and Purpose of ISO 5060

At its core, ISO 5060 is designed to guide users in evaluating translation quality through an analytical, segment-by-segment assessment. It enables evaluators to review translations of human-origin, post-edited machine translations (MT), and even unedited MT output, provided that a human factor is always involved. ISO 5060 emphasises that human expertise remains essential, highlighting its difference from automated quality estimation tools that rely solely on AI algorithms.

The standard's human-centred focus aligns it closely with ISO 17100, a benchmark for translation service quality. ISO 5060 defines translation evaluation as an objective process: evaluators classify errors based on compliance with project specifications rather than on subjective preferences or stylistic choices. This objectivity enhances inter-rater reliability, as the criteria for error classification remain consistent across evaluators, supporting fair and standardised assessments.

Objective Evaluation Through Clear Specifications

ISO 5060's methodology is rooted in project specifications, treating deviations from these requirements as errors. By adhering strictly to specifications, the standard aims to eliminate subjectivity in translation quality evaluation, steering away from preferential or stylistic changes that could skew the assessment process. It provides a clear framework that enables TSPs and clients alike



to define expectations from the outset, establishing whether a translation meets or deviates from agreed-upon quality standards.

Error Typology and Severity Levels

The standard introduces an error typology system inspired by the [Multidimensional Quality Metrics \(MQM\)](#) model, with categories covering various error types and severity levels. Errors

are classified as minor, major, or critical, giving evaluators the flexibility to adapt to different contexts. This approach allows TSPs and clients to define what constitutes critical errors versus less severe issues, such as stylistic preferences.

For instance, a single numerical error in a medical translation could be classified as critical due to the potentially severe consequences for patient safety. In contrast, minor errors, while needing correction, might not significantly impact the translation's usability. By tailoring error classifications to specific industry needs, ISO 5060 becomes adaptable to various sectors and translation projects.

Competences and Qualifications of Evaluators

In line with ISO 17100, ISO 5060 outlines the competences required of translation evaluators, underscoring the importance of linguistic expertise, industry knowledge, and experience in error classification. The standard promotes diverse paths into the profession, acknowledging that evaluators can come from varied educational and professional backgrounds as long as they meet specific competence criteria. This flexibility supports an inclusive approach to workforce development within the language services industry.

An Adaptable Tool for a Wide Range of Needs

ISO 5060 is structured as a guidance standard, making it highly adaptable to various user needs. Rather than providing prescriptive requirements, it offers a toolkit of methodologies and suggestions that users can tailor to their specific contexts. This flexibility is reflected in the design of its evaluation scorecards, which can be customised to suit different types of translations and project requirements.

Additionally, the standard includes annexes with supplementary resources, including guidelines on sampling and segment comparisons, helping users establish a framework that aligns with their unique translation evaluation processes.

Scalability and Inter-Rater Reliability

One of the standout features of ISO 5060 is its focus on scalability and inter-rater reliability, which measures the consistency of evaluations across different reviewers, ensures that quality assessments are dependable and standardised, regardless of the evaluator. By providing consistent guidelines for evaluating translation output, it facilitates training and development within translation teams. As new evaluators are introduced, they can be guided by the clear parameters and objective criteria set forth in the standard, making it easier for organisations to scale their quality assurance efforts effectively.



ISO 5060 in Practice: A Path to Greater Objectivity in Translation

ISO 5060 offers a structured, objective approach to translation quality evaluation that minimises subjectivity, aligns with ISO 17100, and leverages the expertise of human evaluators. For language service providers and their clients, this new standard promises to be an invaluable tool, supporting a high level of consistency in translation quality assessments across diverse projects and industries. It brings a methodology that respects the varied demands of the language services sector while providing a flexible, scalable framework.

It is important to note that, as a guidance standard, ISO 5060 differs from certifiable standards like ISO 9001 or ISO 17100. While it provides a robust framework for improving translation quality and aligning evaluations, TSPs cannot obtain ISO 5060 certification. Instead, it serves as a flexible tool to guide quality practices and harmonize assessment methods, allowing language service providers to integrate its principles into their workflows while adapting them to their specific needs and client expectations.

If you are looking to enhance your translation quality evaluation practices, consider how ISO 5060 might fit within your organisation's quality management processes. Ready to adopt a more objective approach to translation assessment? Learn more about implementing ISO 5060 and join the growing community of translation professionals committed to delivering excellence in language services.

Read more about ISO standards development for language services at

<https://atccertification.com/about-iso-standards/>