

1 *GILTy or not GILTy:*  
2 *Tailoring the translation profession to the gospel of standardization*  
3

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6

7 **Abstract**

8 This paper focus on the role of translator training from a professional point of view by  
9 looking at some of the ways through which internationalization strategies and standardisation  
10 policies are embedded in translation discourse and reflected in professional practice via a  
11 politically-correct, standards-based, quality-oriented approach tuned in to the requirements of  
12 the language industry.

13 *All of us who are involved in the translation and localization*  
14 *world know perfectly well that we are in a deregulated industry,*  
15 *in which we institute our own standards, if they are not already*  
16 *imposed for us by our direct or end customers. We also know*  
17 *that every business has its own procedures, sometimes similar,*  
18 *and on other occasions absolutely the opposite. But all these*  
19 *procedures seek the same purpose: to achieve the translation*  
20 *or localization of a product with the highest possible quality.*

21 Juan José Arevalillo Doval, managing partner of *Hermes Traducciones y Servicios*  
22 *Lingüísticos* and President of the Technical Committee for the Standard EN-15038, in “The  
23 EN-15038 European Quality Standard for Translation Services: What’s Behind It?”  
24

25 This paper starts by establishing some sort of dialogue with another text  
26 on globalization by Pierre Cadieux, President of *i18N Incorporation*, and Bert  
27 Esselink, entitled “GILT: Globalization, Internationalization, Localization,  
28 Translation”, in which both authors confess their sense of guilt in relation to  
29 their inadequacy to correctly define the other terms that compose the acronym,  
30 thus recognising, as did Donald DePalma and Hans Fenstermacher, the  
31 impossibility to grasp the meaning of such disparate and volatile terms as  
32 globalization, internationalization and localization.  
33

34 The relentless movement towards unifying language industry procedures  
35 around the so-called GILT effect (G11n, I18n, L10n and Translation)  
36 worldwide is a peculiar trend that started at the end of the 20th century, and still  
37 pervades our perception of translation as a multidisciplinary, industrialised,  
38 business-oriented phenomenon. The transition from the 20th century to the 21st  
39 century was marked by radical changes in the language industry under the  
40 banner of globalization, which follow a similar pattern: a sudden increase in the  
41 spread of information worldwide, the massification in the production of  
42 information and data management routines, powerful internationalization  
43 strategies, the establishment of consistent reciprocal relationships at an

44 international level as well as the emergence of globalized multilingual  
45 collaborative networks.

46  
47 The revolution in the so-called “language economy” landscape can also  
48 be explained by other variables that played a decisive role in the assertion of  
49 translation practice as an autonomous, professionally-oriented subject within  
50 the social and human sciences, namely the development of digital translation  
51 worldwide, the globalization of content management/information retrieval  
52 systems, the development of complex networking routines designed to help  
53 multilingual collaborative activities as well as huge investment campaigns  
54 oriented towards the deployment of intensive globalization strategies.

55  
56 Ultimately, however, this *commoditisation* of translation services, as  
57 stated by Reinhard Schäler (Schäler, 2005) has decisively affected the role,  
58 position and function of the contemporary translation professional, with  
59 unpredictable consequences that need to be assessed accordingly. Translational  
60 interaction as a purposeful, functionalist activity - communicative,  
61 interpersonnal and target-oriented - as expounded by Christiane Nord, is the  
62 result of a dispersive dynamic movement that has fragmented our object of  
63 study into multiple tiny particles that gravitate around a common core where  
64 language professionals live and work.

65  
66 The gradual transformation of translation practice into something new, as  
67 well as its evolution towards new spheres and domains where specialization and  
68 diversification rule, reveals quite distinctly how the language paradigm has  
69 changed in the last few decades thanks to the development of international  
70 exchange policies. This is, in fact, the new information-based economy where  
71 knowledge is produced and processed on a continual basis, where standards are  
72 implemented, where new procedures and routines designed for information  
73 retrieval/knowledge management are adopted, where the individual is  
74 confronted with global contamination and miscegenation and where  
75 communication tends to blend elements of technical and intercultural  
76 communication. In brief, the way translation services are being transformed into  
77 consumer goods or into a commodity shows a unique, inseparable connection,  
78 that is intimately associated with the concept of metamorphosis and  
79 transformation in this sort of boundaryless *McLuhanish* global village which is  
80 connected via multilingual, multiservice networks in a permanent state of flux  
81 and dynamics.

82  
83 The birth of this new type of economy based on the production of specific  
84 goods and services that are mainly associated with intellectual labour or activity,

85 focused on the creation and circulation of information, and linked to the so-  
86 called mercantilization of knowledge in the Information Society, can also be  
87 explained in the light of the most recent changes that have involved profound  
88 changes in the paradigm of production models and the organization of work.  
89 Also worth mentioning is the subsequent transition to new industrialised  
90 patterns which are increasingly more rigid and subject to tightly-corseted rules,  
91 where new production models are associated with much more flexible post-  
92 fordian schemes, characterised by the massification of production routines.  
93 Organized at a global scale via a network of connections that are established  
94 among different economic agents, this new working environment will  
95 eventually lead to the ability to articulate high productivity patterns with  
96 informatized, standardised production units, which are easy to programme, and  
97 able to respond on a fast and adequate basis to the ever-increasing changes that  
98 are observed in terms of demand (product flexibility) or technology (process  
99 flexibility).

100  
101 Faced with the social-professional dynamics and mutability of a  
102 profession that has barely been studied from a sociological perspective, and is  
103 so often undermined in terms of its context and socio-professional background,  
104 we should perhaps start by trying to search for the answer to the following  
105 questions, firstly: “What is it to translate today within a business-oriented  
106 context?”, and, secondly: “How far is this new focus on standards and metrics  
107 affecting the way translators see themselves when confronted with a market that  
108 is increasingly more specialised, volatile and unique?”

109  
110 Our approach assumes that there are new constraints and requirements  
111 that affect translation practice in general based on new business-oriented  
112 patterns, which, on the one hand, may account for its devaluation in terms of  
113 socio-professional status, and, on the other, may explain why the role and place  
114 of the translator is actually being neglected in the most diverse *forums*  
115 worldwide, and metamorphosised into something new, a hybrid entity whose  
116 exact position is worth studying within new settings that are mainly governed  
117 by the designs and constraints of the global economy as well as by the  
118 massification and fragmentation of translation services.

119  
120 According to Don Kiraly, we are now witnessing a sort of “whirlwind of  
121 change in the language market” (Kiraly, 2000:2), and his subsequent  
122 comparison of the current professional *status quo* to an undeniable social void,  
123 whose characterisation or de-characterisation will imply “deep fundamental and  
124 decisive changes within the scope and nature of translation skills” (Kiraly,  
125 2000:19/20), gives us some legitimacy to focus our approach around the

126 concept of the specific restructuring of professionalization aimed at the essential  
127 collaborative and cooperative aspects of the translator's work within mediated  
128 contexts that are simultaneously marked by signs of social interaction within a  
129 business/managerial framework where both human and non-human elements  
130 coexist in the same conceptual actor-network scenario, and where different  
131 agents operate, namely the *producer*, the *provider*, the intermediary and the  
132 client/customer or final/end-user.

133  
134 In the last few decades, the provision of specialised language services  
135 worldwide has benefited immensely from the exponential rise in computer-  
136 oriented solutions aimed at simplifying the process of handling a wide range of  
137 translation projects or assignments at a local level, in such a way that computer  
138 science and the world of technology are actually pervading translation practice  
139 from top to bottom. Both informatics and the new information and  
140 communication technologies (ICTs) are gradually affecting all stages of  
141 translation logistics, from setup to breakdown, helping in the process of  
142 designing integrated, modular "turn-key" services, and developing tailor-made,  
143 customer-oriented products or solutions according to the needs and  
144 requirements of the market.

145  
146 However, in conjunction with its growing technicization and  
147 specialization, as described by Miguel Núñez Ferrer, most of the different and  
148 complex ways of providing translation services have also evolved. This new  
149 trend towards doing business according to standardised, rigid production  
150 models explains why translation companies often try to replicate assembly-line  
151 manufacturing methodologies, as if translation was a mechanized task, where  
152 lean production is valued, time-to-market is privileged and working routines are  
153 automatized in order to improve the final-end product that is offered in terms of  
154 quality, coherence, consistency, speed and layout. Also, the structure according  
155 to which high-quality services are provided is gradually becoming more  
156 professional, routinized and stereotyped, which means that translation is  
157 achieving a new composite status within the scope of social and human  
158 sciences, thanks to the implementation of market laws, namely rules and  
159 regulations that are influenced by the offer/demand paradigm, industrial  
160 production schemes, fixed terms and conditions, time pressures, daily  
161 productivity levels, output and quality standards.

#### 162 163 **Professional Translation: 4 underlying dynamics**

164  
165 In order to contextualise our approach, we have decided to focus our  
166 attention on the analysis of the so-called "professional collective identity" that

167 is developed by translators in the course of their activity, as defined by Anthony  
168 Pym in “Training Translators and European Unification: A Model of the  
169 Market”(April 2000). This model starts from the notion that there is a  
170 “structurally fragmented market that is in some ways the logical consequence of  
171 globalisation” and the result of the division that has been established in the  
172 heart of what is usually called professional, intellectual labour.

173  
174 We are also in agreement with the position adopted by Hermans and  
175 Lambert, and Anthony Pym (2006), according to whom it is necessary to  
176 redefine the role of what is commonly called "business translation" within the  
177 context of translation studies, and thereby to focus our attention on this entirely  
178 new phenomenon by starting to study the type of social organization where  
179 translation often occurs, as well the most frequent managerial routines that are  
180 adopted in the provision of high-quality translation services. We also wish to  
181 base our study on the position defended by Hermans and Lambert, according to  
182 which it is absolutely crucial to redefine the role of so-called "business  
183 translation" within the context of Translation Studies, and therefore to approach  
184 this entirely new phenomenon by analysing how the company is organised, and  
185 by considering the usual management procedures within business-oriented  
186 environments characterised by the provision of services.

187  
188 According to the research being done in the field of the  
189 professionalization of translation practice, namely in the sub-domain of  
190 business translation, it seems possible for us to harmonise two apparently  
191 distinctive areas which are, however, complementary and unified by a common  
192 destiny: profession and training. Indeed, based on the literature available on the  
193 subject of translator training, the conjugation between the world of work and  
194 the academic world geared towards teaching and training translators does  
195 actually seem to be one of the ways in which it will be possible to increase  
196 credibility and emphasise the qualitative self-assertion of the kind of  
197 professionals working in the sector.

198  
199 Our aim will be to draw some conclusions that are useful for research  
200 purposes, beginning with the ability to assess the type of profiles and needs of  
201 the sector as well as the characterisation of a certain type of profile that is  
202 characteristic of the typical Translation Service Provider. Faced with such an  
203 apparent impasse, we consider it possible to detect four major contact points  
204 and four underlying dynamics that actually do seem to characterise both spheres  
205 of knowledge and their respective areas of practical implementation in such a  
206 specific professional activity.

207

208 Firstly, there is the dynamics of globalisation, characterised by items  
209 such as teleworking, networking, teletranslation and localisation, but also  
210 mobility, distance work and a focus on new concepts and technological formats,  
211 something that will ultimately involve the emergence of a new sociological  
212 profile as well as the whole redefinition of the concept of professionalization.

213

214 Secondly, we detect the dynamics of translation as both a process and, at  
215 the same time, a product, with its own specific procedures, routines and  
216 methodology specifically geared towards newly-defined and tailor-made  
217 projects. Within this translational dynamic we also find a whole set of strategies  
218 and theoretical-practical aspects that could enable specialised training for the  
219 translator as well as promoting his/her ability to adapt to the most varied  
220 contexts, backgrounds, professional situations, language pairs and specialised  
221 subjects.

222

223 Thirdly, we will consider the whole dynamics of teaching and training, in  
224 which we will include the ability to learn new skills, to acquire knowledge, and  
225 develop professional aptitude, as well as the formulation of methodological and  
226 conceptual issues in tune with real-life communication situations. Considering  
227 the current circumstances, in which translation actually occurs, this type of  
228 dynamic may eventually imply the redefinition of the training paradigm and  
229 ultimately change the whole teaching and learning process, through the  
230 adoption of new proposals, perspectives, points of view and new pedagogical  
231 methodologies resulting from a market-oriented and highly formatted kind of  
232 vision.

233

234 Finally, we propose the analysis of business-oriented dynamics, a highly  
235 recurrent theme in terms of the data gathered in the course of our research, and,  
236 more concretely, the attention given recently to the increasingly important role  
237 of business culture and business-oriented language derived from management  
238 theories which is, in fact, a frequent issue when we are faced with the enormous  
239 number of norms and procedures that are applied by professionals from the  
240 localisation industry, for instance. This business-oriented trend is characterised  
241 by the perception of translation as a pure act of management, as suggested by  
242 Steyaert and Janssens (Steyaert and Janssens, 1997:143), and also by the  
243 surrendering to the requirements of standardization in the language industry  
244 through the adoption, introduction and interiorisation of new norms, standards,  
245 formats, regulations and precepts which are specifically oriented towards  
246 managing and assessing the processes involved. These include breaking down,  
247 classifying and cataloguing all the stages involved in the translation process,  
248 project management, and quality management and control, using the most

249 adequate and diverse control mechanisms and control metrics which are  
250 specifically targeted in order to render the whole process of providing a  
251 formatted product more flexibly, more precisely and more accurately. Finally,  
252 as suggested by Hermans and Lambert, this approach hides the need to rebuild  
253 and reformulate the whole concept of ethics and the dynamics of providing a  
254 specific translation service within a business-oriented perspective (Hermans and  
255 Lambert, 1998:127), the absolutely crucial importance of integrating the  
256 translators themselves into the objectives, goals and strategies of the translation  
257 agencies, influenced by a healthy atmosphere of dialogue, cooperation and,  
258 “last but not least”, the integration of a certain type of strategic business-  
259 oriented philosophy into the translator training curriculum.

260

### 261 **Speaking about standards as applied to translation services: the new EN** 262 **15038**

263

264 Writing about the power and the effects of standardization in an article  
265 entitled "Standards in the Language Industry", Sue Ellen Wright defines the  
266 best standards as “(...) the ones you use all the time, but that you never even  
267 notice are there.” (Wright, 2004). A standard is therefore a document that has  
268 been defined, written and approved by global consensus by a ratifying body,  
269 establishing a set number of rules, regulations, guidelines and criteria that are  
270 supposed to be applied to a specific type of activity, thus governing a certain  
271 type of professional practice, according to best practice procedures. Standards  
272 are, therefore, usually aimed at regulating industrial experiences by promoting  
273 professionalism according to quality-oriented criteria, implementing  
274 accreditation and/or certification schemes, developing useful metrics for the  
275 assessment of professional practice, creating consistent norms designed to  
276 improve professional procedures and routines and, “last but not least”, by  
277 clarifying issues connected with professionalization.

278

279 In his article on standardization and accreditation, “Accreditation and  
280 Standards in the Translation Industry”, Roger Chriss states that “The translation  
281 industry is in desperate need of some fundamental definitions”, eager to get a  
282 specific set of terms and procedures that will ultimately govern best practices in  
283 professional translation:

284

285 *The translation industry needs to find some simple,*  
286 *clear-cut, straight-forward definitions of what a*  
287 *translator is, what a translator does, how a translator*  
288 *should translate, what constitutes a good translation,*  
289 *what a translation agency is and does, and how*  
*translation agencies and translators, or translation*

290 *employers and translators, should interact with each*  
291 *other, to name a few possibilities.*

292  
293 It is a well-known fact that the complementary notions of quality and  
294 excellence, as applied to industrial domains in the last two decades of the 20th  
295 century, have played a decisive role in the formation of a new professional  
296 awareness of the need to improve services and products. At that time, this  
297 obsession with quality-oriented procedures has quite literally resulted in a real  
298 standardization fever that eventually led, according to Juan José Arevalillo  
299 Doval (2005), to the production of a multitude of different quality standards in a  
300 number of areas, issued and approved under the so-called umbrella of the ISO  
301 standards.

302  
303 Speaking at the first EUATC conference, in a paper appropriately called  
304 “Meeting the requirements of the new CEN standard: future challenges for  
305 cooperation”, Marcel Thelen discussed the European standard for translation  
306 services by identifying a foundation for mutual understanding, i.e. a common  
307 ground of perspectives that were mainly designed to make a specific set of  
308 practices uniform from a professional point of view in the context of language  
309 industry procedures. The potential implementation of the said standard was also  
310 affected by the question of professional accreditation as well as the  
311 development of useful metrics that would eventually permit the assessment,  
312 evaluation and regulation of the performance and productivity patterns of the  
313 professionals in the field, guided by the gospel of quality, in order to clarify  
314 some of the most pressing issues associated with the professionalization of  
315 translation services.

316  
317 In another paper presented at the same event, Miguel Núñez-Ferrer  
318 managed to summarise some of the major reasons and objectives behind the  
319 implementation of the said standard, namely to raise awareness of the type of  
320 services provided (i.e. transparency), establish a distinctive definition of the  
321 scope, breadth and width of a specific translation business assignment (i.e.  
322 specificity), move towards the implementation of clear parameters aimed at  
323 regulating professional practice (i.e. standardization), the establishment of clear  
324 rules and procedures designed to improve the relationship between the client  
325 and the translation service provider, as well as the relationship between  
326 translation agencies and the translator himself/herself (i.e. clarity), promote a  
327 better understanding of the tasks involved in the definition and provision of  
328 high-quality translation services (i.e. clarity), and finally to promote a  
329 cooperative type of organizational culture between the companies acting in  
330 conformity with their standardized requirements (i.e. uniformity). In brief, the



331 European standard was designed to implement a whole series of necessary  
332 requirements and procedures, by focusing the attention on the product itself, as  
333 well as on the quality of the type of service to be provided by each TSP.<sup>1</sup>  
334

335 Considering the important role played by the above-mentioned document  
336 as the cornerstone of our approach, it is our belief that the implementation of  
337 the “EN-15038 European Quality Standard for Translation Services” will have a  
338 profound impact upon the way people see translation as a professional service,  
339 not only by affecting the profession itself and translation practice as well, but  
340 also the way professionals will start to behave and relate to their peers and  
341 customers alike.  
342

343 The standard has several important aspects that are worth stressing for  
344 everybody involved in this supply chain, be it the practitioner, the consumer,  
345 the trainer or the researcher, both upstream and downstream as the case may be.  
346 First of all, the whole concept of the translator itself ends up by being  
347 completely redefined, if not erased, by means of the inclusion of a new  
348 terminological concept, for example, the TSP or *Translation Service Provider*,  
349 i.e. "person or organisation supplying translation services" (EN 15038:2006,  
350 paragraph 2.18, page 6) and, above all, by the distinction that is drawn between  
351 *translation service provider* (TSP) and *translator* (“person who translates” i.e.  
352 “renders information in the source language into the target language in written  
353 form.” (EN 15038:2006, paragraph 2.17, page. 6).  
354

355 The European standard also specifies the basic requirements that are  
356 necessary to achieve the status of a *Translation Service Provider*. This is done  
357 by setting out a new nomenclature that will help clarify the status and profile of  
358 this new language professional, by accurately describing a wide array of  
359 disparate items and procedures that gravitate around the concept and are  
360 involved in the provision of quality services, such as human and technical  
361 resources, quality management policies, quality-oriented practices, project  
362 management, the contractual framework, the client/TSP relationship, the

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<sup>1</sup> The new European standard EN 15038 governing translation services is broadly described as follows in its introductory section:

*The purpose of this European standard is to establish and define the requirements for the provision of quality services by translation service providers.*

*It encompasses the core translation process and all other related aspects involved in providing the service, including quality assurance and traceability.*

*This standard offers both translation service providers and their clients a description and definition of the entire service. At the same time it is designed to provide translation service providers with a set of procedures and requirements to meet market needs.*

*Conformity assessment and certification based on this standard are envisaged.*

European Standard En 15038 – Translation Services – Service Requirements (Version May 2006).

363 TSP/TSP relationship (individual or organization), as well as a whole new range  
364 of concepts associated with the notion of a translation service, namely value-  
365 added services, *locale*, controlled languages, project management, quality  
366 management, pre-editing, post-editing; checking, reviser/proofreading;  
367 reviewer/review, project registration details, project registration, project  
368 assignment or style guides.

369

370 As far as skills and competencies are concerned, the EN 15038 Standard  
371 for Translation Services is also involved in the establishment of a prescriptive  
372 frame of reference comprising a series of basic requirements or categories that  
373 are considered to be important to the formation of the future Translation Service  
374 Provider's profile. Among the qualities that are supposed to be found in this  
375 new professional outline one can easily find a wide range of features such as  
376 human resource management skills, professional skills, translation skills,  
377 linguistic and textual skills (both SL and TL), research skills, information  
378 retrieval/knowledge processing skills, cultural skills, interpersonal skills,  
379 technical/technological skills, revision and editing skills, material resource  
380 management and professional development.

381

### 382 **Standardization, Training and the Profession: some doubts and** 383 **directions...**

384

385 There are many questions and there are many doubts that surround the  
386 implementation of the new translation standard. And there are the threats and  
387 challenges arising from its future implementation, both upstream and  
388 downstream, as we have already stated. Before concluding our paper we would  
389 like to take the opportunity to reflect on the impact of standardization  
390 procedures upon the training of professional translators, by posing some topics  
391 and contributions for reflection in order to recontextualize translation practice  
392 within specific business-oriented settings marked by social interaction.

393

394 In the face of this new configuration of the translator's profile and  
395 function, it seems important that the kind of training provided should be as  
396 polyvalent and versatile as possible, as well as sufficiently multifaceted,  
397 integrated and multimodal. It should also be geared towards the so-called new  
398 satellite-professions or extensions of the task of the translator and conveniently  
399 open and available so as to solve the equation problem posed by the  
400 specialist/generalist dichotomy. Quoting Cauer, and subverting his rather  
401 famous *dictum*, the type of training offered should be as general as possible and  
402 as specialised as necessary. If our goal is to train the kind of individual that  
403 Nord calls the "functional translator" (Nord, 2005:210 and 211), i.e. a

404 professional translator who is aware that translation today is used in the most  
405 varied communication situations, thus requiring a special flair for articulating  
406 professional knowledge with the most suitable social norms and technical-  
407 functional skills, it is possible that just one type of training that is both balanced  
408 and diversified, as well as compatible with the new personal and professional  
409 demands on the translator, can meet the diverse requirements of the new market,  
410 where the individual translator is confronted with the specific dynamics of  
411 project management, human resources management, materials management and,  
412 above all, an entirely new dynamic geared towards sociability and the  
413 application of a specific *savoir-faire*. In this sense, a multi and interdisciplinary  
414 approach seems to be a wise option in order to provide the trainee with a series  
415 of strategies and solutions that will eventually allow him to easily integrate and  
416 adapt himself to the new working contexts, with which s/he will be constantly  
417 faced, characterised by a vast array of language combinations, thematic and  
418 conceptual specialisation as well as technological diversification and  
419 complexity. Basically, a more human interactive and pro-active kind of training  
420 focused on the individual as a person, whilst at the same time professionally  
421 oriented and focused on such crucial values as quality of service, ethics and  
422 deontology. This approach will eventually help us regain a new technical  
423 culture of the craft, while at the same time implying the knowledge of what to  
424 do and how to be that is deeply rooted in specialised contexts marked by social  
425 interaction. This would be a type of training that would be able to respond to the  
426 exigencies and constraints of a professional activity and at the same time to  
427 combine the four challenges which underlie a true ethics of professionalization  
428 as proposed by Jaques Delors, i.e. learning to be (individual), learning to know  
429 (knowledge), learning to do (technique) and learning to live together / interact  
430 (social).

431

432 This seems to be one of the possible keys which will allow us to cope  
433 with the winds of change that are affecting the type of profession we want, in  
434 particular at a time when the vast majority of the most recent publications on  
435 the theme (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2004, Pym, 2005 and 2006) seems to be  
436 redirecting our attention to the essential role played by the human element that  
437 has somehow seemed to have become lost in the translation process, i.e. by  
438 privileging people and behaviours, especially in the face of the omnipresent and  
439 normative character of industrial patterns which are exclusively focused on the  
440 value of functional and technical qualities.

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