

Rubric for translations

Please note that when reading translations into Chinese, I always grade the “readability” and “style” categories in consultation with a Chinese native speaker (usually a colleague in the LCC).

	Poor <i>has major problems of a fundamental nature</i>	So-so <i>has significant problems; plenty of room for improvement</i>	Competent <i>has minor problems; could use some fine-tuning</i>	Masterful <i>flawless; no need for improvement that I can see</i>
Readability “达”	Difficult or almost impossible to read. The reader might often feel tempted to consult the source text to understand the translation.	Reading requires effort, but it is still possible to follow from beginning to end.	Reads smoothly, but the reader may experience some minor distractions and confusions.	An utterly smooth read for a reader familiar with the genre. No distractions whatsoever.
Accuracy “信”	Contains major unintended deviations from the meaning of the source text resulting from misunderstanding, lack of thought, lack of research, or (if L2 translation) misuse of L2 vocabulary.	Contains obvious deviations from the meaning of the source text that serve no clear purpose, likely the result of misunderstanding, lack of research, or misuse of L2 vocabulary.	Shows a high degree of attention to detail and the nuances of meaning. However, there may be small unintentional deviations from the meaning of the source text that serve no clear purpose.	Shows a high degree of attention to detail and to the nuances of meaning. Deviations from the source text clearly serve a good purpose, such as enhancing readability or stylistic appropriateness.
Style “雅”	Style is confused; there is not a single discernable style. Or style is utterly inappropriate for the genre. May feel “stiff,” “awkward,” or “robot-like.” No sense of “voice” at all.	Style is not always appropriate to genre; stylistic choices leave something to be desired. May feel “stiff,” “awkward,” or “robot-like.” If a sense of “voice” is present, it is uneven and not always appropriate for the writer or speaker(s).	The text is written in a style appropriate for the genre. There may be a sense of “voice.” But occasional word choices or sentence patterns are inappropriate for the genre or for the voices of the writer or speaker(s).	Style is pitch-perfect: utterly appropriate for the genre. A sense of “voice” is present (when appropriate), both for the writer/narrator and for characters or other speakers within the text. Characters or other speakers speak in ways that are convincing and appropriate.

Instructions for translator’s note (reflection essay)

Your translator’s note is always due **48 hours** after we discuss your translation. Translator’s notes should be completed individually — each of you write your own. To submit your note, just **send me it to me directly** by email or WeChat.

Prompt: *In a brief essay, describe an interesting challenge posed by the text you translated, and the strategies you employed to meet that challenge. **Keep it within 600 words.** EAP-track students should write in English; CSL-track students should write in Chinese (using 1000 字 as the word limit).*

A successful translator’s note will:

- Be written in clear and effective prose
- Explore a single idea or insight in depth (rather than scattering your attention across many separate ideas)
- Explain your ideas clearly and vividly using specific examples (rather than communicating just in vague abstract generalizations)
- Focus on describing what you see in the text – help me “see it through your eyes” (rather than just narrating the process of translating, i.e. “first we did this, then we did this, then we did this...”)
- Show me you’re using some of the concepts we’re exploring in this class to think about your translation work; or show me some other interesting insight that doing this translation assignment has given you.

Think of this as a way to document your thought process as a translator, both for me and for yourself. **Please respect the word limit** (this is different from my rules in other classes regarding word limits).

Rubric for translator’s note (reflection essay)

√-	√	√+
Devoid of substance – has almost nothing to say. (Or says it so incoherently that it seems that way.) May be rushed, incomplete, or clearly did not take the assignment seriously.	Completes the assignment in good faith, but there’s plenty of room for improvement. Might say something meaningful but not go particularly deep. Might lack focus, scattering attention over too many unrelated points, or get hung up on details that don’t illuminate some meaningful larger idea. Tends to narrate the process of translation rather than describing the qualities of the language that were interesting or important to the translator.	Explores a single idea (or several closely related ideas) in satisfying depth, illustrating points using specific examples. May draw a connection with the ideas we’re exploring in this class, or offer some other interesting angle or insight. Describes in a clear and vivid way the qualities of the language that were interesting or important to the translator— helps me “see the text through your eyes.”

Final grade calculations

A	Scores “competent” or higher in all three areas in the final challenge. Achieves a ✓+ on a translator’s note and continues to score ✓+’s on all subsequent ones.
A-	Scores “competent” or higher in two of three areas in the final challenge. Achieves a ✓+ on at least one translator’s note.
B+	Scores “competent” or higher in one of three areas in the final challenge.
B	No “poors” in the final challenge
B-	One or two “poors” across all three challenges
C range and below	More than two “poors” across all three challenges

(a ✓- on a translator’s note counts as a “poor” here)

Special rule 1: Two “competents” earned on challenge 1 or 2 (must be the same challenge), or two ✓+’s on translator’s notes, may compensate for one “so-so” on the final challenge.

Special rule 2: Scoring in the “masterful” category functions as a tiebreaker. If you have at least one of these and yours is a borderline case between two of the grade levels, I’ll bump it up to the higher grade level.

Special rule 3: A noticeable pattern of late, missing, or incomplete work, and/or a noticeable pattern of unexcused lates and absences, may lower the student’s final grade—by half a grade level if minor, by a whole grade level or more if severe.