
Graduate Certificate in French Translation (Gibraltar)

* French Language and Style for Translation

Accent aigu – A diacritical mark (´) placed over the letter “e” to indicate a closed /e/ sound, as in “été”.
Related terms: accent grave, accent circonflexe. Example: “Café” vs. “Cafe” (the accent signals pronunciation and can affect meaning. Challenge: Omitting the accent in digital texts may lead to ambiguity.)

Accent circonflexe – The “hat” (ˆ) placed over vowels (â, ê, î, ô, û) often marking historical loss of a consonant (e.g., “Hôpital” from “hospital”). Related terms: accent aigu, orthographe réformée. Example: “Forêt” vs. “Foret”. Translators must decide whether to retain the accent in target language titles where diacritics are uncommon.

Accent grave – The grave accent (`) appears on “e”, “a”, and “u” (è, à, ù) to indicate an open /ɛ/ vowel or to distinguish homographs (e.g., “où” vs “ou”). Related terms: accent aigu, accent circonflexe. Example: “là” (there) vs. “la” (the). In translation, preserving the accent can affect readability and semantic clarity.

Adjectif qualificatif – An adjective that conveys a quality, property, or characteristic of a noun (e.g., “Grand”, “élégant”). Related terms: adjectif démonstratif, adjectif possessif. Example: “Une maison ancienne” → “an old house”. Challenge: French adjectives often follow the noun; translators must adjust word order for English while preserving nuance.

Adjectif démonstratif – Demonstrative adjectives (ce, cet, cette, ces) that point to specific nouns. Related terms: adjectif possessif, adjectif qualificatif. Example: “Cette idée” → “this idea”. In French, gender and number agreement is mandatory; English lacks gender, so translation must keep reference clarity.

Adjectif possessif – Possessive adjectives (mon, ma, mes, etc.) indicating ownership. Related terms: pronom possessif, adjectif démonstratif. Example: “Son livre” → “his/her book”. The translator must infer gender of the possessor from context, as French marks it but English does not.

Adverb – A word that modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb, expressing manner, time, place, or degree (e.g., “Rapidement”, “très”). Related terms: adjectif, adverbial phrase. Example: “Il parle doucement” → “He speaks softly”. Challenges include preserving adverb placement, which can differ between languages.

Adverbial phrase – A multi-word expression that functions as an adverb (e.g., “À la hâte”, “en même temps”). Related terms: adverb, prepositional phrase. Example: “En fait” → “in fact”. Translators must decide whether a literal rendering or an idiomatic equivalent best conveys the intended nuance.

Anglicisme – A lexical borrowing from English that may be unsuitable in formal French (e.g., “Le weekend”). Related terms: faux ami, emprunt lexical. Example: “Un meeting” vs. “Une réunion”. Translators should replace anglicisms with appropriate French terms unless the source context requires retention.

Apocope – The omission of a final sound or syllable, common in spoken French (e.g., “T’es” for “tu es”). Related terms: élision, liaison. Example: “C’est” → “it’s”. In translation, apocope may signal informal register;

the target language must reflect the same level of colloquialism.

Argument de traduction – The rationale guiding translation choices, encompassing fidelity, transparency, and acceptability. Related terms: *équivalence dynamique*, *équivalence formelle*. Example: Choosing a domesticated term for “*boulangerie*” in a culinary guide. Translators must balance source-text accuracy with target-reader expectations.

Article défini – The definite article (*le, la, les, l'*) that specifies a known noun. Related terms: *article indéfini*, *partitif*. Example: “*La voiture*” → “the car”. French articles convey gender and number; English lacks gender, so translators must ensure the referent is clear.

Article indéfini – The indefinite article (*un, une, des*) indicating an unspecified noun. Related terms: *article défini*, *partitif*. Example: “*Une idée*” → “an idea”. In translation, context determines whether “a” or “some” best captures the nuance.

Article partitif – The partitive article (*du, de la, de l', des*) used for non-countable nouns or portions (e.G., “*Du pain*”). Related terms: *article indéfini*, *article défini*. Example: “*Du fromage*” → “some cheese”. Translators often render partitives as “some” or omit them when English does not require a partitive.

Assimilation – A phonological process where a sound becomes more like a neighboring sound (e.G., “In-” before “p” becomes “im-”). Related terms: *liaison*, *élision*. Example: “*Un ami*” pronounced “un-nami”. Awareness of assimilation aids accurate transcription and pronunciation guides for translators.

Calque – A literal translation of a foreign expression (e.G., “*Gratte-ciel*” from English “skyscraper”). Related terms: *emprunt lexical*, *faux ami*. Example: “To make sense” → “*faire sens*”. Calques can enrich the target language but may sound forced; translators must assess acceptability.

Cognate – Words in two languages that share a common etymological origin (e.G., “*Information*” and “*information*”). Example: “*Un problème*” → “a problem”. Cognates facilitate comprehension but can mask subtle differences in meaning.

Conjugaison – The system of verb inflection indicating tense, mood, aspect, person, and number. Related terms: *mode verbal*, *temps composé*. Example: “*Je parlerai*” (future) → “I will speak”. Translators must select the appropriate English tense and aspect to reflect French nuances.

Conjugaison composée – Verb forms built with auxiliary verbs (*avoir* or *être*) plus a past participle (e.G., “*J’ai mangé*”). Related terms: *conjugaison*, *temps simples*. Example: “*Elle était partie*” → “she had left”. The choice between simple past and past perfect in English depends on narrative context.

Contexte culturel – The set of cultural knowledge, values, and practices that shape meaning. Related terms: *register*, *pragmatics*. Example: Translating “*faire la bise*” requires explaining a cheek-kiss greeting. Translators must decide whether to add a footnote, use an equivalent, or retain the original term.

Défectif – A verb that lacks certain forms (e.G., “*Falloir*” has no first-person singular). Related terms: *verbe impersonnel*, *auxiliaire*. Example: “*Il faut que...*” → “It is necessary that...”. Translators must handle missing forms by rephrasing.

Déterminant – A word that introduces a noun phrase, including articles, demonstratives, possessives, and quantifiers. Related terms: article, pronom. Example: “Ces livres” → “these books”. Understanding determiners aids accurate noun-phrase translation.

Élision – The omission of a vowel at word boundaries, marked by an apostrophe (e.G., “L’homme”). Related terms: liaison, assimilation. Example: “Je + ai” → “j’ai”. Translators must reflect the informal tone that élision often conveys.

Équivalence dynamique – A translation strategy that prioritizes functional equivalence, rendering the source message in a way that produces the same effect on the target audience. Related terms: équivalence formelle, adaptation. Example: Translating “avoir le cafard” as “to feel down”. This approach often requires idiomatic rendering.

Équivalence formelle – A translation strategy that seeks a literal, word-for-word correspondence, preserving structure and lexical items. Related terms: équivalence dynamique, calque. Example: “Le chat noir” → “the black cat”. Useful for legal or technical texts where precision is paramount.

Faux ami – A word that looks similar in French and English but differs in meaning (e.G., “Actuellement” vs “actually”). Related terms: cognate, emprunt lexical. Example: “Sensible” (French = sensitive) → “sensitive”. Translators must verify meaning to avoid misinterpretation.

Futur antérieur – A compound future tense indicating an action that will be completed before another future event (e.G., “J’aurai fini”). Related terms: plus-que-parfait, conditionnel passé. Example: “Quand il sera parti, je partirai” → “When he has left, I will leave”. English often uses “will have” constructions.

Genre grammatical – The classification of nouns as masculine or feminine, influencing agreement of articles, adjectives, and pronouns. Related terms: accord, déterminant. Example: “Le tableau” (masc.) Vs. “La table” (fem.). Translators must be aware of gender when choosing pronouns in languages that mark it.

Homographe – Words that share spelling but differ in meaning and sometimes pronunciation (e.G., “Livre” = book or pound). Related terms: homophone, polysemy. Example: “Il a un livre lourd” → “He has a heavy book”. Disambiguation relies on context.

Homophone – Words that sound alike but differ in spelling and meaning (e.G., “Vert” vs “vers”). Related terms: homographe, paronym. Example: “Il va au vert” → “He goes to the countryside”. Translators must choose the correct lexical item based on context.

Idiom – A fixed expression whose meaning cannot be deduced from its components (e.G., “Tirer les vers du nez”). Related terms: expression idiomatique, équivalence dynamique. Example: “To beat around the bush”. Idioms often require a target-language idiom rather than a literal translation.

Impératif – The mood used for commands, requests, or instructions (e.G., “Parle!”). Related terms: mode indicatif, mode subjonctif. Example: “Ne touchez pas” → “Don’t touch”. Translators must preserve politeness level and sometimes add softeners in English.

Impersonnel – Constructions lacking a grammatical subject, often using “il” or infinitive forms (e.G., “Il

faut..."). Related terms: verbe impersonnel, subjonctif. Example: "Il est nécessaire de..." → "It is necessary to...". Rendering may involve restructuring the sentence.

Infinitif – The base form of a verb, often used after certain verbs or prepositions (e.G., "Manger"). Related terms: participe passé, gérondif. Example: "Je veux manger" → "I want to eat". In English, infinitive "to" is required; translators must watch for split infinitives and stylistic preferences.

Inversion – The placement of the verb before the subject, typically in formal questions (e.G., "Avez-vous...?"). Related terms: question indirecte, intonation interrogative. Example: "Avez-vous vu cela?" → "Have you seen that?". Maintaining formal register may dictate preserving inversion in literary translation.

Lexique spécialisé – Vocabulary specific to a particular domain (e.G., Medical, legal, technical). Related terms: terminologie, glossaire. Example: "Œdème" → "edema". Specialized lexicon demands accurate equivalents and often consultation of domain-specific resources.

Level of language (Niveau de langue) – The register ranging from colloquial (familier) to formal (formel) and literary (soutenu). Related terms: register, style. Example: "Ça craint" (fam.) → "That sucks" (informal). Translators must match the source register to the appropriate target register.

Liaison – The pronunciation of a normally silent final consonant before a vowel-initial word (e.G., "Les amis"). Related terms: élision, assimilation. Example: "Vous avez" pronounced "vou z avez". While not reflected in writing, awareness helps in oral translation and subtitle timing.

Locution adverbiale – A multi-word adverbial expression (e.G., "En même temps"). Related terms: adverbial phrase, idiome. Example: "En bref" → "in short". Translators must decide whether a literal rendering or a target-language equivalent better conveys the sense.

Masculine – The grammatical gender applied to nouns, pronouns, and adjectives that are classified as male. Related terms: féminin, genre grammatical. Example: "Le soleil" (masc.). In English, gender is often neutral; translators must be careful when gender-specific pronouns appear in the source.

Metonymie – A figure of speech where a term is substituted with another that is closely associated (e.G., "La Maison Blanche" for the U.S. Administration). Related terms: synecdoque, métonymie. Example: "Boire un verre" → "have a drink". Translators should preserve the rhetorical effect while ensuring cultural relevance.

Modalité – The expression of attitude, possibility, necessity, or obligation, often via modal verbs or adverbs (e.G., "Peut", "doit"). Related terms: mode verbal, temps. Example: "Il peut venir" → "He can come". Choosing the correct English modal reflects nuance in certainty.

Nom commun – A common noun denoting a class of objects or concepts (e.G., "Chaise"). Related terms: nom propre, déterminant. Example: "Une chaise" → "a chair". Translators must account for gendered articles in French that have no direct English counterpart.

Nom propre – A proper noun identifying a unique entity (e.G., "Paris", "Victor Hugo"). Related terms: nom commun, translittération. Example: "Le Louvre" → "the Louvre". Translators may need to decide whether to keep the original name, provide a translation, or add explanatory notes.

Nominalisation – The process of turning a verb or adjective into a noun (e.G., “Lire” → “la lecture”). Related terms: verbal noun, syntactic conversion. Example: “La mise en place” → “the setup”. In English, nominalisations can increase formality; translators must balance readability.

Numéral cardinal – Numbers used for counting (un, deux, trois). Related terms: numéral ordinal, nombre. Example: “Trois hommes” → “three men”. In translation, numerals may be written out or expressed as digits depending on style guidelines.

Numéral ordinal – Numbers indicating order (premier, deuxième, troisième). Related terms: numéral cardinal, rang. Example: “Le troisième chapitre” → “the third chapter”. Translators must respect the target language’s ordinal conventions.

Participe passé – The past participle used in compound tenses and as an adjective (e.G., “Mangé”). Related terms: auxiliaire, temps composé. Example: “J’ai fini” → “I have finished”. Agreement rules in French (gender/number) may affect translation when the participle functions adjectivally.

Participe présent – The present participle (-ant) used to form progressive aspects or as an adjective (e.G., “Chantant”). Related terms: gérondif, participe passé. Example: “Un homme chantant” → “a singing man”. English often uses a gerund (“singing”) or a relative clause.

Passif – The passive voice, formed with “être” + past participle (e.G., “Le livre est lu”). Related terms: voix active, transformations syntaxiques. Example: “Le tableau a été vendu” → “The painting was sold”. Translators must decide whether to retain the passive or switch to active for readability.

Phrase nominale – A noun phrase lacking a finite verb, often used in headlines or bullet points (e.G., “Nouvelles directives”). Related terms: phrase verbale, ellipse. Example: “Réduction des coûts” → “Cost reduction”. In English, nominal style may be acceptable in technical documents but less so in narrative prose.

Politesse – The set of linguistic strategies that convey respect, formality, or deference (e.G., “Vous” vs. “Tu”). Related terms: register, forme de vous. Example: “Pourriez-vous m’aider?” → “Could you help me?”. Translators must mirror the level of politeness appropriate to the target audience.

Pronom personnel – Personal pronouns (je, tu, il, nous, vous, ils) that replace nouns. Related terms: pronom possessif, pronom démonstratif. Example: “Je le vois” → “I see him”. English pronouns lack gender for “it”; translators must verify antecedent gender in French.

Pronom possessif – Possessive pronouns (le mien, la sienne) indicating ownership without a noun. Related terms: adjectif possessif, pronom personnel. Example: “C’est le tien” → “That’s yours”. Translators must ensure agreement with the antecedent’s gender and number.

Pronunciation guide – Notation (often IPA) used to convey how a word sounds. Related terms: phonétique, orthographe. Example: “Café [ka.fe]”. In translation, providing a guide can aid readers unfamiliar with French phonology.

Prosodie – The rhythm, stress, and intonation patterns of spoken language. Related terms: intonation,

accentuation. Example: The rising intonation in a yes-no question. Translators of subtitles or audio-visual material must align prosodic cues with target language timing.

Quotient de lisibilité – A metric assessing text difficulty (e.G., Flesch-Kincaid). Related terms: niveau de langue, style. Example: A technical manual may require a low readability score. Translators may need to adjust sentence length to meet target audience expectations.

Réflexif – Verbs that use a reflexive pronoun (se) to indicate that the subject performs the action on itself (e.G., “Se laver”). Related terms: verbe pronominal, construction impersonnelle. Example: “Il se souvient” → “He remembers”. English may omit the reflexive pronoun, requiring careful handling.

Register – The level of formality or style appropriate to a particular context (formal, informal, technical). Related terms: niveau de langue, politesse. Example: “Je vous remercie” (formal) vs. “Merci” (informal). Translators must select equivalents that match the intended register.

Régime verbal – The pattern of arguments a verb requires (transitive, intransitive, ditransitive). Related terms: valence verbale, construction syntaxique. Example: “Donner” requires a direct and an indirect object. Mis-matching objects can lead to mistranslation.

Sémantique – The study of meaning at the lexical and sentence level. Related terms: pragmatique, lexicologie. Example: Distinguishing “voir” (perceive) from “regarder” (look). Translators must preserve semantic fields to avoid distortions.

Synonyme – A word with a similar meaning (e.G., “Rapide” → “vite”). Related terms: antonyme, nuance. Example: “Une maison spacieuse” → “a spacious house”. Choosing the right synonym depends on register and collocational constraints.

Synecdoque – A figure of speech where a part represents the whole or vice versa (e.G., “Les voiles” for “les bateaux”). Related terms: métonymie, figure de style. Example: “Une bonne plume” → “a good writer”. Translators must render the effect without confusing the reader.

Temps simple – Simple verb tenses (présent, imparfait, passé simple, futur simple). Related terms: temps composé, aspect. Example: “Il marchait” → “He was walking”. Selecting the appropriate English tense may involve aspectual considerations.

Temps composé – Tenses formed with auxiliary + past participle (passé composé, plus-que-parfait). Related terms: temps simple, auxiliaire. Example: “J’avais fini” → “I had finished”. Translators must decide between perfect and past perfect based on narrative sequence.

Termes de spécialité – Domain-specific expressions (e.G., “Circuit intégré” in electronics). Related terms: lexique spécialisé, glossaire. Example: “Système d’exploitation” → “operating system”. Accurate translation often requires consultation of industry-standard terminology.

Traduction à sens unique – A translation where the source text contains a single, unambiguous meaning, allowing a straightforward rendering. Related terms: équivalence formelle, traduction littérale. Example: “Le soleil se lève” → “the sun rises”. Even simple sentences can hide cultural nuances.

Traduction libre – A flexible approach that prioritizes conveying the overall sense, tone, and effect rather than literal wording. Related terms: *équivalence dynamique*, *adaptation*. Example: Translating a poem may involve re-creating rhyme and meter. This method often requires creative rewriting.

Traduction technique – Translation of specialized documents such as manuals, specifications, and safety notices. Example: “*Procédure d’arrêt d’urgence*” → “*emergency shutdown procedure*”. Consistency, accuracy, and adherence to standards are paramount.

Traduction littérale – A word-for-word rendering that preserves the source structure as much as possible. Related terms: *équivalence formelle*, *calque*. Example: “*Il fait froid*” → “*It makes cold*”. Often unsuitable for idiomatic or stylistic elements.

Traduction officielle – Translation intended for legal or governmental use, requiring strict fidelity and often certification. Related terms: *norme ISO 17100*, *certificat de traduction*. Example: Translating a treaty clause. Translators must follow prescribed formatting and terminology guidelines.

Traduction simultanée – Real-time oral translation delivered while the source speaker is speaking, common in conferences. Related terms: *interprétation consécutive*, *cabine d’interprétation*. Challenges include speed, note-taking, and managing speaker-specific idioms.

Traduction consécutive – Interpreting after the speaker pauses, allowing for note-taking and more accurate rendering. Related terms: *traduction simultanée*, *mémoire de travail*. Example: Diplomatic meetings where nuance is critical. Translators must retain tone and register.

Troncation – The shortening of a word, often in informal speech (e.g., “*Photo*” from “*photographie*”). Related terms: *apocope*, *élision*. Example: “*Un resto*” → “*a restaurant*”. Translators need to decide whether the informal truncation fits the target register.

Typologie textuelle – Classification of texts by purpose and structure (narrative, expository, argumentative). Related terms: *genre littéraire*, *register*. Example: Translating a “*lettre de motivation*” (cover letter) requires a persuasive tone. Understanding text type guides stylistic choices.

Valeur pragmatique – The meaning derived from context, speaker intention, and social factors. Related terms: *pragmatique*, *sémantique*. Example: “*C’est gentil*” can be sincere or sarcastic. Translators must capture implied meaning, not just literal content.

Verbe auxiliaire – Helper verbs (*avoir*, *être*) used to form compound tenses. Related terms: *temps composé*, *participe passé*. Example: “*Il a parlé*” → “*He has spoken*”. Choosing the correct auxiliary in translation affects aspectual interpretation.

Verbe modal – Verbs expressing ability, permission, or obligation (*pouvoir*, *devoir*, *vouloir*). Related terms: *modalité*, *verbe auxiliaire*. Example: “*Je dois partir*” → “*I must leave*”. Translators must preserve the strength of obligation or possibility.

Verbe pronominal – Verbs that require a reflexive pronoun (*se*) even when the action is not reflexive (e.g., “*S’en aller*”). Related terms: *réflexif*, *construction impersonnelle*. Example: “*Il s’en va*” → “*He’s leaving*”.

English often omits the pronoun, demanding careful rendering.

Voix active – The grammatical voice where the subject performs the action (e.G., “Le chat mange le poisson”). Related terms: *voix passive*, *transformation syntaxique*. Example: “Le chat a attrapé la souris” → “The cat caught the mouse”. Translators may switch to passive for stylistic reasons.

Voix passive – The grammatical voice where the subject receives the action (e.G., “Le poisson est mangé par le chat”). Related terms: *voix active*, *transformation syntaxique*. Example: “La décision a été prise” → “The decision was made”. In English, passive constructions may be reduced for clarity.

Zone de traduction – The segment of text designated for translation, often defined by software tools (e.G., CAT tools). Related terms: *segment*, *mémoire de traduction*. Example: Translating a 500-word “zone de traduction” in a UI file. Understanding segmentation rules aids consistency.

Accord de participe – The rule that past participles agree in gender and number when used with “être” or with “avoir” followed by a direct object placed before the verb. Related terms: *participe passé*, *accord du sujet*. Example: “Les lettres écrites” → “the letters written”. In English, agreement is not expressed, but translators must note the nuance when the participle functions adjectivally.

Adjectif démonstratif – Demonstrative adjectives that point to specific nouns (*ce, cet, cette, ces*). Related terms: *adjectif possessif*, *déterminant*. Example: “Ces idées” → “these ideas”. French gender agreement must be reflected in the choice of English demonstrative (“this” vs. “These”).

Adjectif indéfini – Indefinite adjectives that express quantity or quality without specifying exact identity (*quelques, plusieurs, certain*). Related terms: *article indéfini*, *déterminant*. Example: “Plusieurs raisons” → “several reasons”. Translators must align the degree of indefiniteness with the target language.

Adjectif ordinal – Ordinal adjectives indicating position (*premier, deuxième, dernier*). Related terms: *numéral ordinal*, *rang*. Example: “Le premier chapitre” → “the first chapter”. English spelling conventions (first, second) must be observed.

Example: “Ma voiture” → “my car”. Gender agreement in French does not affect English possessive pronouns, but the translator must keep the correct referent.

Adverbe de fréquence – Frequency adverbs (*souvent, rarement, toujours*). Related terms: *adverbe de temps*, *adverbe de manière*. Example: “Il travaille souvent tard” → “He often works late”. Placement may differ; English adverbs typically precede the main verb.

Affixe dérivationnel – Morphological element added to a root to create a new word (e.G., *-ité, -eur*). Related terms: *préfixe*, *suffixe*. Example: “Vérité” (noun) from “vrai” (adj.) → “Truth”. Translators must recognize derivational patterns to locate appropriate equivalents.

Alvéolaire – A place of articulation where the tongue contacts the alveolar ridge (e.G., /T/, /d/). Related terms: *phonème*, *articulation*. Example: French “t” in “temps”. Pronunciation guides may note alveolar quality for language learners.

Analyse morphologique – The study of word structure, including roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Related terms: syntaxe, lexicologie. Example: Decomposing “incompréhensible” into “in- + compréhensible”. Understanding morphology assists in accurate lexical translation.

Analyse syntaxique – The examination of sentence structure, identifying subjects, predicates, objects, and modifiers. Related terms: grammaire, analyse morphologique. Example: Parsing “Le chat noir qui dort sur le canapé”. Translators use syntactic analysis to reorder sentences for target language fluency.

Argument de traduction – The justification for a specific translation decision, often documented in a translation brief. Related terms: choix lexical, justification stylistique. Example: Opting for “hospital” over “clinic” based on target audience. Documenting arguments supports consistency across projects.

Article partitif – Partitive article used with non-count nouns (du, de la, des). Example: “Du pain” → “some bread”. English often omits the article, but translation must preserve the sense of an indefinite quantity.

Aspect verbal – The way a verb expresses the flow of time (perfective vs. Imperfective). Example: “Il était en train de lire” → “He was reading”. English progressive forms often convey the imperfective aspect.

Assonance – Repetition of vowel sounds for poetic effect.