Review of the Quality of the French Translation of the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN®)

Conducted by the Translation Bureau, Service New Brunswick, Government of New Brunswick, for the Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB)

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INTRODUCTION
In December 2015, the Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB) asked the New Brunswick Translation Bureau to help assess the quality of the French and of the translation of the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN®). Fully aware of the importance of this task, the Translation Bureau asked a certified translator reviser with close to 20 years in the field, and in particular in the medical, post-secondary, training and labour fields, to do the assessment.

Accordingly, this report’s objective is to provide a brief review of the quality of the French translation of the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN®). Pearson VUE is responsible for the NCLEX.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES
I went to the Pearson VUE office responsible for the NCLEX in Chicago. The review was done on February 12, 2016. When I arrived, I was greeted by two representatives from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSNB) and two representatives from Pearson VUE, who introduced themselves. It is important to note that they stayed with me throughout the exam. There was a discussion period that gave me an opportunity to ask questions. A PowerPoint presentation followed on their translation process. I was also able to do the tutorial that is given to the candidates before taking the exam so they know the various formats of questions they may see. Among the representatives, there was a bilingual nurse who was able to help me with any nursing specific concepts if needed. She was also able to tell me all the terms that were decided upon by the Translation Item Review Panel (hereafter referred to as “Review Panel”). I reviewed a French exam with 60 questions in all. The correct answers were indicated.

OBSERVATIONS
The two objectives of my review were to determine if there were errors in French that could affect a person’s ability to understand the questions and the answers, and to do an analysis of the translation as such.

I therefore read each question and series of possible answers in French before reading the English and doing a review of the quality of the translation.

The French was at about a Grade 9 level.

Generally speaking, the possible answers were often very well written in French. They were concise and clear. The stems, meaning the beginning part of the questions, were sometimes less concise.
As for the translation as such, I created a table with five main columns (errors in meaning, terminology errors, syntax errors, language errors, and stylistic errors) and two smaller columns for each main category (major errors and minor errors). There were 60 rows in all, one for each question, and each row had an additional row for observations.

The table was based on the Quality Control Tool used by revisers at the Translation Bureau, Government of New Brunswick. I also based my review on the process used by the Corporation of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of New Brunswick (CTINB) to assess applications for certification on dossier.

Generally speaking, the language transfer is done well. There is a good understanding of the source and target languages. The content of the message is accurately translated. Semantic and stylistic equivalents are used. There is a good understanding of the subject fields and use of appropriate terminology. There is an adaptation to the intended audience based on decisions made by the Review Panel, and these decisions are recorded in order to justify the use of certain expressions. Furthermore, broadly speaking, spelling, grammar, syntax and punctuation are correct. As stated previously, the possible answer sentences are often clearer, more concise and more precise than the stems (usually a clinical scenario and an introductory question). However, I would say that in general the possible answers are very good translations, and that the questions are good translations.

The stem for the first question could have been more concise. The expression “Staff development conference,” which is repeated several times throughout the exam, was translated by “programme de formation du personnel,” based on a decision by the Review Panel. Given that it refers to various types of training, I would simply translate it as “formation du personnel.”

The second question had a terminology error for “joint pain” by translating it as “douleur de l’articulation” instead of “douleur articulaire.” However, given the context of the question, I don’t think it would have affected comprehension.

“Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP)” was translated by “un aide en soins de santé non réglementé” based on a decision made by the Review Panel. It is noteworthy that the expression is used in the 2013 NCLEX-RN® Detailed Test Plan, Item Writer/Item reviewer/Nurse Educator Version, which is readily available online, and in the French version.

In question seven, “identifier” is used to translate “identify.” However, despite it being an anglicism in that particular context, it is widely used throughout Canada.

In question 10, there is a major error, an omission in the stem (“250 ml”). There is also an addition, though it wasn’t necessarily a mistake given the context (“service de radiologie”).
The expression “Primary health care provider” is translated by “prestataire de soins de santé principal.” The expression was approved by the Review Panel and is found in the Detailed Test Plan.

There are sometimes shifts in meaning, such as in question 12: “has received the following telephone message” is translated by “doit répondre aux messages téléphoniques.” Nonetheless, given the context, I don’t think it would affect comprehension. It is understood in the question that the person will have to return phone calls.

Sometimes the stems are a little long, and from a stylistic standpoint, could be better written in French (logic of the French language).

An error found a few times is the expression “a renseigné” without using the correct preposition (correct form: “renseigner quelqu’un sur quelque chose”). Often it would have been better to translate it by “a fourni des renseignements à un client.”

It seems that the Review Panel opted for “au cours d’un enseignement” when the term “taught” is used. In my opinion, that is an overtranslation.

In the English exam, both the imperial and the metric systems are used. I think that given the bilingual context it should also be the case in the French exam as opposed to only using the metric system.

In the English exam, the wording “which of the following information” is often used. I would recommend translating it by wording such as “Trouvez, dans les exemples suivants, les renseignements qu’elle devrait inclure” or “Choisissez une seule réponse.”

The expression “trottineur” is used instead of “tout-petit” for “toddler,” which is correct. Furthermore, it is used in nursing manuals. Even so, “tout-petit” seems more frequently used.

The wording “abusée physiquement,” though frequently used, is an anglicism. I would recommend “victime de violence physique”.

The Review Panel chose “solution physiologique” to translate “normal saline”; possible correct translations are “soluté isotonique de chlorure de sodium” or “solution isotonique de chlorure de sodium.” However, the wording “solution physiologique” is used in nursing manuals.
The wording “a client with (name of illness)” is translated by “un client avec (nom de la maladie).” It should be checked. I would recommend “un client atteint de” or “un client souffrant de.”

Another omission is in question 42: “bipolar 1 disorder” is translated as “trouble bipolaire.” The correct translation would be “trouble bipolaire de type 1.”

The translation of “bibasilar crackles” should be checked (“rôles crépitants basilaires” in the French exam).

A terminology search should be done for “intra-arterial blood pressure monitoring line.”

The lexicon has a limited number of terms. Good additional resources for terms used in the exam can be found in the 2013 NCLEX-RN® Detailed Test Plan, Item Writer/Item reviewer/Nurse Educator Version, and in the French version. However, three terms that exist in the French version, terminology section of the document, are not included in the lexicon (“prescription” and “prestataire de soins de santé principal”). It should be determined whether or not additional terms should be included in the lexicon.

Approximately 40 questions out of 60 did not elicit any observations.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, overall, the quality of the French translation of the exam I reviewed was satisfactory given that there are no major errors in meaning or major language errors, and the level of French was appropriate.

Respectfully submitted March 1st, 2016.

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