

Chapter 5: Things to think about when you enter new translations.

Changing translations in Italian Nouns is easy. The hard part is deciding what to change them to.

The requirements are:

- There is a limit of 32 characters for a 'single translation'.
- There are some limitations on punctuation, especially inside brackets.
- The translation has to be 'findable'.
- The translation should be a word or phrase that the user is likely to think of as a suitable answer in the Italian-to-English translation exercises.
- The total translation mustn't be too long to be displayed in the Browse window (this is not likely to cause problems in practice).
- Ideally, the translation shouldn't look foolish in the Browse window by consisting of a series of only slightly different versions.

What is a 'single translation'?

The word 'translation' is used in this manual with two separate meanings. It means the entire translation that appears near the top of the Browse window. It also means the individual parts of the translation that are separated by commas - we call these a 'single translation'.

For example, for 'miseria' there are seven separate 'single translations'. They are 'poverty, scarcity, lack, misery, meanness, weakness, bad piece of work'. Taken together, the seven of them amount to the entire 'translation' for 'miseria'.

It is only in the Browse window that the seven 'single translations' for 'miseria' appear together. For exercises, and for using Find, each 'single translation' is a separate unit. The Exercises window will present 'poverty' or 'scarcity' or any of the other five, but it will only present one at a time.

If the entire translation consists of two or more 'single translations', the different 'single translations' must be separated by a comma followed by a space. There's no limit on the number of separate 'single translations', but no one 'single translation' can exceed 32 characters. If a 'single translation' is longer than 32 characters, it won't be presented in translation exercises.

The limit of 32 characters doesn't include the comma and space between one 'translation' and the next - the limit is 34 characters if you count the comma and space.

If a 'single translation' is between about 20 and 32 characters, it will function successfully, but it may not be easy to read in the miniature 'Find' and 'Correct Answer' windows. The

program will squeeze the characters together to display as much of the translation as possible. Even so it won't necessarily be able to show more than around 24 characters in the miniature windows.

You should avoid using comma followed by a space in the translations except to separate one 'single translation' from the next. This is because the program interprets the comma and space as meaning 'end of translation'.

You can put part of the translation in brackets.

Sometimes you want to include a word or two of explanation in the translation, but you don't want the extra words to be a compulsory part of the answer that has to be typed in F->E translation exercises. In this case you can put the explanatory words in brackets. The brackets must be round brackets. You should leave one space between the main part of the translation and the opening bracket. For example, there are several Italian words for 'coffee'. As the module stands when this is being written, they are all translated simply as 'coffee', but they could be translated like this -

caffè
coffee (strong and black)
caffelatte
coffee (white)
cappuccino
coffee (white and frothy)
espresso
coffee (black)

The entire translation for a particular word may contain more than one 'single translation'. Each 'single translation' can have its own bracketed addition. Each additional 'single translation' should be preceded by a comma and a space. For example, the Italian word 'pantaloni' has been translated as 'trousers (UK), pants (US)', to cater for differences in British and American usage.

If you are up against the 32-character limit for a 'single translation', it's worth knowing that the 32 characters don't have to include the brackets, nor the contents of the brackets. In the 'pantaloni' example, you only need to count the 8 characters in 'trousers' or the 5 characters in 'pants'.

The words in brackets are displayed in some windows and not in others:

- They are displayed in the 'translation' area of the Browse window.
- They are displayed in the miniature 'Correct Answer' window.
- They are not displayed in the miniature 'Find' window.
- They are not displayed in E->F translation exercises in the Exercises window.
- They should not be typed in the answers to F->E translation exercises.

What can you put in brackets?

You can put any brief explanation that helps to explain the meaning of the word. The words in brackets are not counted in the 32-character limit, but a long explanation could overcrowd this part of the Browse window. The Comments box is a more suitable place for the long explanations that are sometimes necessary. The use of brackets in the 'translation' offers the chance to link a particular explanation to a particular single translation, and has the advantage that there is less risk of it being accidentally deleted.

The brackets shouldn't include a comma followed by an ordinary space, because the program would interpret this to mean 'end of translation'. This is sometimes a little awkward, because you may want to separate two slightly different ideas inside the brackets.

What you can do is use a semi-colon followed by an ordinary space, or you can use a comma followed by a 'non-breaking space'. A 'non-breaking space' is a different character from an ordinary space. So, provided you use a non-breaking space, your translation can be on the lines of 'doctor (male, academic and medical)' or 'doctor (male; academic, medical)'. To type a non-breaking space, press the Option key on your keyboard, hold it down, and press the space-bar.

The translation has to be 'findable'.

We explained in chapter 2 that the Find feature looks for a translation that starts with whatever you typed in the Find box. To get the best results from the Find feature, you should bear this in mind when you decide what translations to enter. If you type 'exchange' in the Find box, the program will show you 'scambio'. It won't find 'cambio', for which the translation provided is 'foreign exchange'. If you feel it's important that typing the English word 'exchange' should find both these Italian words, you could change the translation of 'cambio' to 'exchange (foreign)'.

Duplicate entries for the same English word.

The same English word is likely to be used in the translations for several different Italian words.

In English-to-Italian translation exercises, if the program presents the English word 'friend', with nothing to indicate whether the friend is male or female, the user can type either 'amico' or 'amica' (or both in different panels) and both answers are marked Right. In the same way, the English word 'money' is used for the translation of both 'denaro' and 'soldi'. If the program presents 'money' in an English-to-Italian translation exercise, the user can type either 'denaro' or 'soldi' (or both). This method is the kindest to beginners.

A student who is further advanced may want the exercises to be more rigorous. You can achieve this by adding an explanatory word or two as part of the translation, not in brackets, for example 'friend male' and 'friend female', or 'window of house' and 'window of shop'.

If you include this kind of clue, the program will expect the user to take notice of it. If the Exercises window presents 'window of shop', the correct answer is 'vetrina', and 'finestra' will be marked Wrong.

If you make an addition of this kind it will also affect the Italian-to-English translation

exercises. If you translate 'amico' as 'friend male', when the program presents 'amico' for translation the answer has to be 'friend male'.

You can use the Find feature in the Browse window to check whether there is already an entry that uses the English word you have in mind for a translation.

Try to choose an English word or phrase that the user is likely to think of.

If you are entering translations for someone else to use, you may want to consider which English words or phrases will come into their mind when presented with a particular Italian word in a translation exercise. The English word that is closest to the Italian meaning may be an uncommon word that not everyone will know. It may be a good idea to provide some alternatives.

Sometimes there is no brief English equivalent for the Italian word. There doesn't seem to be an English word for 'woman in charge of a department in a department store', and it's not easy to translate this in 32 characters in such a way that the user can deduce that the required answer is 'caporeparto'. It may have to be accepted that some words won't operate with complete success in translation exercises.

There is also the question of hyphenation. Should the translation be 'door-bell' or 'door bell'? 'Swimming-pool' or 'swimming pool'? 'Girlfriend' or 'girl-friend'? The program is not able to be flexible about this. If the only translation provided for 'campanello' is 'door-bell', then 'door bell' and 'doorbell' will be marked Wrong.

The 'entire translation' mustn't be too long.

In practice this won't be a problem for most users. The length of the 'entire translation' that can be displayed in the Browse window varies from as few as 40 characters to as many as 180 characters. This is using Geneva 9, which is what the program is pre-set to use. The exact length depends chiefly on how wide you can make the Browse window. It's also affected by the characters involved (the word 'little' occupies less space than 'large'), and by the position of the breaks between words. You can change the font - see below - but not the size.

The 'Meaning' panel will display about 100 characters in Geneva 9. If your translation is longer than this, you can continue typing and you will be able to see what you type. But the translations that are displayed in the Browse window won't necessarily be the whole of what you have typed in the 'Meaning' panel.

Long explanations, which are sometimes necessary to convey the meaning, can be put in the Comments box. The situation is a bit different from a dictionary in which the 'translation' has to include everything necessary to explain the word concerned.

Ideally, the translation shouldn't look foolish in the Browse window.

This is partly a cosmetic point. It's probably more important to choose translations that meet the other requirements, which may mean including several slight variations of a single English word. The result could be irritating for a user who uses the translation to learn the main meanings of a particular word in Italian. A partial solution is to put the significant

'single translations' early in the 'entire translation', and relegate the variations to the end.

Changing the font for the translations.

The translation is normally displayed in Geneva, which provides good legibility at a small size. If you need to, you can change the font used for displaying the translations. This feature is intended mainly for users who need to use special characters in the translations. It isn't likely to increase the length of the translation that can be read in the Browse window. If you want to use a different font for translations, pull down the DB menu, choose DB Settings and Rules, and click 'Defects and Fonts' near the top of the dialog box that appears. In the next dialog box that appears, use the pop-up menu called 'Native Font'. If the module is likely to be used on a different computer, for instance in a school, you may want to check that the font you choose is available in the other computer.

The manual is continued in Chapter 6, which deals with adding and changing 'irregular' words. To open Chapter 6, press **⌘6** or pull down the Contents menu on the manual's menu bar and choose the next chapter.