

# The Truth about Translation

Everything you wanted to know about  
translation but didn't know who to ask

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### **Translators are often asked:**

- Why can't it be ready tomorrow?
- What makes translation so difficult?
- Why is it so expensive?

The ITA (Israel Translators Association) offers you this leaflet in response to these questions.

### **What is translation really all about?**

Just like lawyers, doctors or accountants indisputably require specialized knowledge and skills to perform their jobs well, so do translators. Why?

Because high-quality translation requires:

- The ability to quickly learn about new subject areas and stay up-to-date on new developments in specialized fields
- The skill and creativity that often border on the artistic
- Broad knowledge of at least two languages and cultures
- Specific knowledge in particular areas

Translation also requires time:

- Time to grasp the essence of the material
- Time to clarify the obscure
- Time to shape and recheck for consistent terminology and style to produce a worthy final product

**Translation is NOT typing in another language!**

### **Why do you need such a professional level of translation?**

To be ready for the international market - think international

Literal (word for word) translation of material filled with allusions to the local culture – sports, customs, landmarks and well-known sayings – is not sufficient or appropriate. A professional translator knows how to convey your messages in a style that will sit well with your target audience.

It is also not enough to rely on English. Even though the vast majority of materials on the Internet are in English, only about 25% of the world's population is really comfortable with it. Over 90% need or would prefer to see materials in their native language.

## To avoid common pitfalls

Avoid the temptation to do it yourself.

*Would you let someone who just graduated from a six-hour first-aid course perform surgery on you?*

While your foreign contacts will easily forgive errors in spoken language, giving them unpolished written materials may be considered insulting. Use a professional translator.

## Avoid the temptation to use a non-professional bilingual

*Would you put your company's annual financial statements in the hands of a first year student of accounting?*

Knowing two languages, even really fluently, and being a translator are not necessarily the same thing at all. In fact, most bilinguals are completely unskilled in the art of translation. Use a professional translator.

## Look for expert knowledge

*Would you let your corporate merger be handled by an expert in family law?*

Every translator has different educational background, expertise and interests. Use a professional translator who is knowledgeable in your field.

## Proofreading and typography

*How would you feel if you discovered that the Spanish version of your company profile doesn't boast to readers that the firm has over 100 years (100 años) of experience, but instead informs them that the firm has "100 anuses" (100 anos)!*

Typographical conventions vary from one language to another. Last-minute additions (headings, captions, word changes) by well-meaning non-linguists can sabotage an otherwise effective document. Be sure to allow your professional translator to review materials after typesetting and graphic layout to avoid costly embarrassments.

**Save time, money and unnecessary grief! The more the translator knows, the better your final product will be.**

Be sure to let the translator know:

- The purpose of the document – website content, internal report, brochure for potential clients, etc.
- The *precise* target language – British or American English? Spanish for Spain or Mexico? Traditional or Simplified Chinese?

## Answer the translator's questions:

With translators, curiosity is not a sign of ignorance, but of professionalism. Remember that without adequate information, the translator may make mistakes which then become *your* mistakes, which cost you clients, deals, and even your reputation!

## And talking about cost...

Yes, you will find a wide range of prices out there, but remember, “cheap” can be very costly! You might save a few hundred on the translation, but if a poor job loses you thousands worth of business – is it worth it?

Rush jobs also come at a price – you may even pay more, but you will get a poorer product – no clarifications, no double-checking, and no quality assurance.

Remember – translation is an art and a skill – and costs money!

**If you are wondering can you afford to pay for a professional translation, ask yourself a simple question: *Can you afford not to?***

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**ITA members translate into many languages and have expertise in a wide variety of fields.**

**We invite you to visit our website - [www.ita.org.il](http://www.ita.org.il) - and search our database to find a translator that suits your needs and view our recommended rates.**