



Working with Translations

We at Language & Culture Worldwide take great pride in our translation services. We seek to make your translation efforts easier not only by providing outstanding service, but by empowering you with the knowledge and information which make your job easier... right now and down the road. As always, we are available at any time to help with any comments or questions you may have with your translations.

Sincerely,

The translators, editors, and staff of Language & Culture Worldwide

Translation Concepts

Source Language

The language of the **original** document you wish to have translated.

Target Language

The language into which you wish the document to be translated.

Common notation works as follows:

"English translated into French" = ENG>FRE

Translator

The person who knowledgeably and creatively expresses the source document (**your** words) in the target language (**their** words).

Proofreader/Editor

The person who verifies the translator's work. This may include verification of word choice, sentence structure, and style, as well as spelling.

Translation Agency

A company which specializes in coordinating the work of multiple translators for multiple clients. The benefits to clients of using an agency include a centralized contact for sending documents, questions, and inquiries; an effective method for finding and coordinating specialized translators and editors; and a quick and easy payment system for multiple jobs and translators.

How to Ensure Our Translation Meets Your Needs

The simple sentence "I need the following document translated into German," rarely provides sufficient information for a quality translation. For maximum success, you should always know and communicate a few special pieces of information to LCW or any translator:

The location of the target audience.

(country, region, and sometimes even city)



Informing the translator that you would like a translation into Russian for people in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will greatly improve the accuracy of the translation. In some instances, specifically those where the audience may be from multiple countries, this may not be possible and the translator must use more general language. This is especially common with Spanish language translations because of the innumerable dialects which exist across the globe.

The demographics of the target audience.

(Who are the readers -- lawyers or laborers?)

While legal documents obviously require a translator specialized in legal terms, other audiences may also require special attention. Informing LCW that the ultimate reader will be a group of executives and not entry-level laborers may affect our word choice.

If the desired audience is unclear to the translator, they may make language choices which don't meet your needs. A Spaniard would never be able to please a Mexican reader unless he was informed that the reader was indeed from Mexico. Similarly, it is possible to write the same sentence two different ways for two types of readers. The language used to convey current events differs greatly between Newsweek and The Economist, yet both are in English.

Which means...

Always be specific as to who will be receiving the translated document and make any necessary requests ahead of time. An example of a clear translation request would be: Please have this translated into German for Austria – it will be sent out to all nurses at our hospitals in Vienna.



Evaluating the Translation You Receive

Translation is an art, not a science. The translated document that you receive is a talented professional's interpretation, from one language to another, of your original document. Most specialized translators work only **into** their native language, so the person translating your English document into French is typically a native French speaker...mentally interpreting the meaning of the English text you have supplied and producing a French text which he or she considers equivalent in meaning. This brings up two important points you should remember as you receive your translation:

The translated document you have received is written with the phrasing and structural choices of one or more translators. Nearly every sentence we write can be re-written a different way – sometimes truly better, sometimes not. It is for this reason that even in our own writing, we often request peer reviews or proofreaders. While you might be able to make a change to some of the sentences in **this** document to make it more “your style”, it was still written by a native English speaker.

Many foreign languages have dialectal differences. Take the English spoken in the U.S. as an example. On the East Coast, people wait “on line”, while in the Midwest, people wait “in line”. A French translator from Switzerland may translate certain phrases in such a way that a French speaker from Tunisia may disagree. Disagreement, in this case, is most often a question of location.

There are therefore two key phrases to listen for as others (perhaps internal to your organization) evaluate a translation: “I don't like the way that sounds,” and “That is not correct.” In the case of the first, many things might sound better, but weeks of iterations could be needed before everyone agrees. If you send your document to **100 translators**, you will receive **100 different translations**. The second phrase, on the other hand, may in fact indicate that something is amiss in the document (e.g., a misunderstanding of the intended meaning by the translator).

Which means...

There are three basic reasons why others may criticize a translation:

- The native speaker has a different style of writing and/or speaking.
- The native speaker is from a different region than the translator.
- There is truly an error in the translation

One Language, so Many Dialects... and Cultures?

When translating one document into a language with multiple dialects, it is possible to prepare one translation which is then “tweaked” by editors from each dialect. This saves time and money by avoiding duplicate translations. For example, a single document translated into general Spanish by a translator in Spain can then be sent to editors in Costa Rica, Argentina, and Los Angeles. Each individual editor then takes responsibility for adapting the document so that it reads and feels “local”. The L.A. editor may incorporate vocabulary from the local Mexican community, while the Argentine translator is interchanging “vos” for “tú” (the specific form of the word “you” used almost exclusively in Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay).



One step beyond this dialectal adaptation is a **cultural adaptation**. Cultural adaptation is most often used in documents which have a creative or subjective aspect to them. Examples of such documents might include business cases, informative pamphlets, persuasive letters, presentations, or simply texts using extended analogies and metaphors. In this case, not only does the L.A. editor include local vocabulary, they may change references to include things from Southern California, migrant communities, etc. The Argentine editor adds a bit of “South Americana” to her version, while the Costa Rican editor adds a Central American/ Caribbean feel to his document.

Cultural adaptation adds multiple layers of subjectivity to the document, thus **truly changing the work from simple translation to true “adaptation”**. For cultural changes, you must have full confidence in the editor and may wish to spend time upon completion discussing the nuances of the new document. It is also important to note that in some cases a cultural audit may require as little as an hour or two; for larger works, several days may be needed.

Which means...

Preparing a document in one language for many audiences may require more than a simple translation. Your options include localizing the dialect of the document as well as, in certain cases, localizing the culture of the document!

Quick Question?

Does your document contain references to things that foreign readers may not understand nor have access to? (e.g., “Americana”, associations, names of government agencies, state laws, telephone numbers). If so, it may need more than just translation!