

Your Guide to Understanding The Translation Process

Translation is a much more difficult art than most people tend to think. To translate a single phrase or sentence a translator must grasp the essence of what is being said and, selecting the most appropriate target language vocabulary and juggling the two different grammatical systems, convert this into a target language sentence that is both an accurate reflection of the original and also well worded and natural sounding.

This is a lot for the human brain to handle all at once – classic multitask computing at work. As a result, it's normal for an initial translation to cling a little too closely to the original language (be a little too literal) and to therefore sound somewhat unnatural and stilted in the target language. It's also very easy for the translator to miss something out because of the complexity of the mental processing involved.

A systematic and thorough translation process is therefore essential to overcome these difficulties. This is the process a professional translation service will use:

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| <p>Step 1 The translator reads through or skim reads the text to gain an overview of its content. He/she will note key concepts and terms requiring further research or that may be difficult to translate.</p> <p>Step 2 The document is translated.</p> <p>Step 3 This initial translation is thoroughly and systematically checked - phrase by phrase and sometimes word by word - to ensure nothing has been missed and nothing misinterpreted. The wording of the translation will also be refined and improved in this step.</p> <p>Step 4 The translation is put aside for a few hours or overnight.</p> <p>Step 5 The translator re-reads the translation (without reference to the source document) looking solely at quality of expression and carries out his/her final editing to further polish the translated text.</p> <p>Step 6 A second translator reviews the 'final' translation, checking that nothing has been misconstrued from the source document and completing a double check of all names and figures. The second translator will discuss any instances of unclear expression with the principal translator and a final text will be agreed on.</p> |
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Bitter experience has shown that the systematic skipping of any of these steps will almost inevitably lead to poor quality translations and errors or omissions. However strict adherence to the process, coupled with appropriate translator selection, has proven to be a very successful and consistently reliable quality control system.